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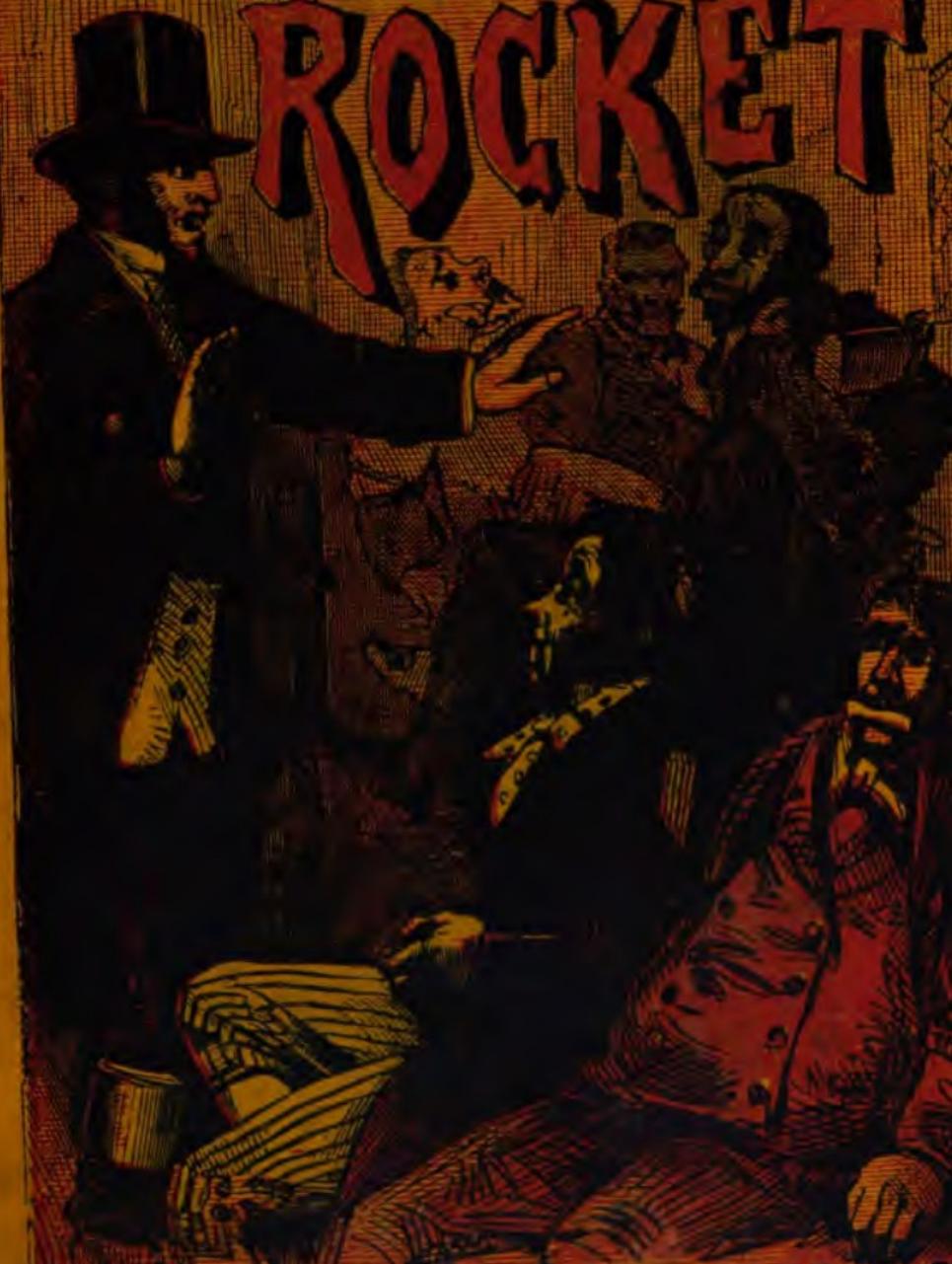
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TOM ROCKETT



BY THE BANFFON BLANQUE JUNR.
LONDON WARD & LOCK 158 FLEET STREET



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TOM ROCKET

&c. &c. &c.

BY

ALBANY FONBLANQUE, JUN.,

AUTHOR OF "RIGHTS AND WRONGS," "THE MAN OF FORTUNE,"
HOW WE ARE GOVERNED," &c. &c.

LONDON :

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PREFACE.

THE Tales of which this volume is composed have appeared, from time to time, in the pages of the WELCOME GUEST and other periodicals.

These journals, though purchased and read by thousands, are not preserved by many. Those who subscribe to one may not buy another, and therefore I think that the most general and industrious reader of serial literature will find at least half of the present book new to him.

The conclusion of the story of "The Filibuster" is absolutely original, as a change of dynasty in the government of the paper in which its first chapters appeared, prevented its completion therein. Those of my readers who have flattered me by expressing their disappointment

PREFACE.

at such mutilation, will now have an opportunity of renewing their interest in the tale.

“Our Town” also will come fresh to all, save a very limited circle of friends in the north of England.

ALBANY FONBLANQUE, Jun.

Temple, May, 1860.

T O M R O C K E T.

"It happened to my father," said a tall man in the chimney corner, "and that's how I came to know all about it."

The chimney-corner is that of the Rising Sun, a pleasant little roadside inn, about two miles from Northampton, and the tall man is the president of a bowling-club that met there, once a fortnight, principally to dine. The "it," of which the speaker's relative was the hero, is the adventure which forms the subject of this narrative.

The reason why we were listening to stories, instead of playing bowls, was simply this. One of the heaviest thunder-storms that I can remember, broke over the Rising Sun that afternoon. All during dinner we could see great ragged, copper-coloured clouds banking up against the wind, and the cloth was hardly off the table, when spit! spat! spat! against the diamond-shaped window-panes came a few heavy hail-stones, then came the lightning, then came the thunder, and then came the rain, as though it had not rained for ten years, and was determined to make up for lost time. So there was nothing for it but to sit still and amuse ourselves, as best we could, in-doors; and the conversation having turned upon travelling, and the

dangers of the road before railways were invented, Mr. Josh Sandiger, our president, sitting and smoking his pipe in the chimney corner, volunteered to tell us a tale of those times, and said he, "It happened to my father, and that's how I came to know all about it."

I do not think you would like me to give you the story just as Mr. Josh gave it us; you might get vexed with his pipe. He always smokes a very long clay pipe, which seems to require a great deal of management to get it to draw properly. He never says more than about six words at a time; then he has a pull at his pipe, and goes on again, giving you a whiff of words, and then a whiff of smoke, whilst you are turning them over in your mind and wondering what is coming next. About every tenth whiff, he takes his pipe out of his mouth and looks gravely into the bowl; then he takes the tobacco-stopper, presses down the ashes carefully, and shakes them out on the hob; then he looks into it again, and, if it is all right, he dips the shank end into his brandy and water, looks into the bowl a third time, and gives it a rub with his cuff. Next, he opens his mouth wide, puts the sealing-wax end in, closes his lips upon it slowly, and then goes on again with his story, six words at a time as before. He is reckoned a very emphatic speaker in these parts, is our president. And so, of course, he is; but I must confess, out of his hearing, that all this fidgetting, these pauses, and puffings, and stoppings, and rubbings, and lookings at nothing at all, in the middle of a story, irritate me sometimes to that degree that I feel inclined to run at him, knock his pipe out of his mouth, and *shriek* at him to get on faster—that I do!

It would be as well, perhaps, then, if I were to quote

his own words as nearly as I can recollect them straight on, and put his pipe out.

My father (continued Mr. Josh), used often to say that he would like to see the man who could rob him upon the highway, and one fine November evening he *did* see him.

You young fellows who are accustomed to be whisked away a hundred miles between your breakfast and your dinner by an express train, and grumble vastly if you are ten minutes behind time, don't know much about what travelling was in 1795—cross country travelling 'specially. Folks did not leave their homes then if they could help it. It's all very fine to talk about the beauties of the country, and the delights of a change of scene, but when there are more highwaymen than scavengers or police about, the roads are not so very charming, I can tell you. Why, it was a week's journey from here to London and back, in those days! and if you got home with whole bones and a full purse, you were not in a hurry to tempt Providence and Tom Rocket a second time.

Tom Rocket was a highwayman. No one ever christened him Tom, and his father's name was not Rocket. When he was tried for his life at Warwick Assizes, he was arraigned as Charles Jackson, and they were particular about names then. If you indicted a man as Jim, and his true name was Joe, he got off; and when the law was altered—so that they could set such errors right at the trial—people, leastwise lawyers, said that the British Constitution was being pulled up, root and branch. But that's neither here nor there.

I cannot tell you how it was that he came to be known as Tom Rocket, and if I could, it woula not have anything

to do with my story. For six years he was the most famous thief in the Midland counties, and for six years no one knew what he was like. He was a lazy fellow, was Tom ; he never came out except when there was a good prize to be picked up, and he had his scouts and his spies all over the place to give him information about booty, and to warn him of danger. But to judge by what people said, he was "on the road" at half-a-dozen different places at once every day of his life ; for you see when any one was robbed of his property, or found it convenient so to account for it, why he laid it upon Tom Rocket as a sort of excuse for giving it up easily, because, you see, no one thought of resisting Tom. So it was, that all sorts of conflicting descriptions of his person got abroad. One said that he was an awfully tall man and had a voice like thunder ; another that he was a mild little man, with black eyes and light hair. He was a fiery fat man, with blue eyes and black hair with some ; he had a jolly red face—he was as pale as death—his nose was Roman one day, Grecian or a snub the next. His dress was all the colours of the rainbow, and as for his horse !—that was of every shade and breed that was ever heard of, and of a good many more beside, that have yet to be found out. He wore a black half-mask, but somehow or other it was always obliging enough to slip off, so as to give each of his victims a full view of his face, only no two of them could ever agree as to what it was like.

My father was a Gloucestershire man. He stood six feet three in his stockings, and measured thirty-six inches across the chest. He could double up a half-crown between his finger and thumb, and was as brave as a lion. So, many a time and oft, when any one talked of the

dangers of the road, he would set his great teeth together, shake his head, and say that he should like to see the man that could rob *him* on the highway ; and, as I said before, he *did* see him, and it was Tom Rocket.

My father was a lawyer, and was, at the time I have mentioned, engaged in a great tithe cause that was to be tried at Warwick Spring Assizes. So, shortly before Christmas, he had to go over to look up the evidence. There was no cross-country coach, so he rode ; and being, as I have said, a brave man, he rode alone. He transacted his business ; and my poor mother being ill, and not liking to leave her alone longer than he could help, he set out to ride home again about half-past nine o'clock that same evening. It was as beautiful a winter's night as ever you were out in. His nag was a first-rate hunter, as docile as a dog, and fit to carry even his weight over, or past anything. He had a brace of excellent pistols in his holsters ; and he jogged along, humming a merry tune, neither thinking nor caring for any robber under the sun. All of a sudden, it struck him that the pretty barmaid of an inn just out of Warwick town, where he had stopped to have a girth that he had broken patched together, had been very busy with those self-same pistols ; and suspecting that she might have been tampering with them, he drew the charges and re-loaded them carefully. This done, he jogged on again as before.

He had ridden about ten miles, when he came to a wooden bridge that there was in those days over the Avon. Just beyond it rose a stiffish hill, at the top of which was a sudden bend in the road. Just as my father reached this turn, a masked horseman suddenly wheeled round upon him, and bade him "*Stand and deliver !*" It was Tom

Rocket ! In a second my father's pistols were out, cocked, and snapped within a yard of the highwayman's chest ; but, one after the other, they missed fire ! The pretty barmaid—a special favourite of Tom's—was too sharp to rely upon the old dodge of drawing the balls, or damping the charge : she thrust a pin into each touch-hole, and then broke it short off.

"Any more?" Tom inquired, as coolly as you please, when my father's second pistol flashed in the pan.

"Yes!" shouted my father in a fury, "one for your nob!" And seizing the weapon last used by the muzzle, he hurled it with all his might and main at Rocket's head. Tom ducked, the pistol flew over the hedge, and my father, thrown out of balance by his exertion, lost his seat, and fell heavily on the grass by the road side. In less time than it takes to say so, Tom dismounted, seized my father by the collar, and presenting a pistol within an inch of his face as he lay, bade him be quiet, or it would be the worse for him.

"You've given me a deal of trouble," said Tom, "so just hand over your purse without any more ado, or by G—! I'll send a bullet through your skull—just there ;" and he laid the cold muzzle of his pistol on my father's forehead just between his eyes.

It is bad enough to have to look down the barrel of loaded fire-arms upon full cock, with a highwayman's finger upon the trigger ; but to have the cold muzzle pressed slowly upon your head—ugh!—it makes me creep to think of it. My father made a virtue of necessity, and quietly gave up his purse.

"Much good may it do you," he said ; "for there's only three and sixpence in it."

"Now for your pooket-book," said Tom, not heeding him.

"Pocket-book?" inquired my father, turning a little pale.

"Aye, pocket-book!" Tom repeated; "a thick black one; it is in the left-hand pocket of your riding-coat."

"Here it is," said my father; "you know so much about it that perhaps you can tell what its contents are worth?"

"I'll see," Tom replied, quietly taking out and unfolding half a dozen legal-looking documents.

"They are law-papers—not worth a rush to you or any one else," said my father.

"Then," Tom replied, "I may tear them up," and he made as though he would do so.

"Hold! on your life!" my father shouted, struggling hard, but in vain, to rise.

"Oh! they *are* worth something then," said Tom, with a grin.

"It would take a deal of trouble to make them out again," my father replied sulkily,—that's all.

"How much trouble?" Tom inquired with a meaning look.

"Well," my father answered, "I suppose I know what you are driving at. Hand me them back and let me go, and I promise to send you a hundred pounds when and where you please.

"You know very well that these papers are worth more than a hundred," said Tom.

"A hundred and fifty, then," said my father.

"Go on," said Tom.

"I tell you what it is, you scoundrel," cried my father,

"I'll stake five hundred against them if you'll loose your hold, and fight me fairly for it."

Tom only chuckled.

"Why what a ninny you must take me for," he said, "Why should I bother myself fighting for what I even get without."

"You're a cur, that's what you are," my father shouted in a fury.

"Don't be cross," said Tom, "it don't become you to look red in the face. Now, attend to me," he continued in an altered tone, "do you see that bridge? Well! There's a heap of stones in the centre, isn't there? Very good! If you will place five hundred guineas in gold, in a bag, amongst those stones at twelve o'clock at night this day week, you shall find your pocket-book and all its contents in the same place two hours afterwards."

"How am I to know that you will keep your word," my father replied, a little softened by the hope of regaining, even at so heavy a price the papers that were invaluable to him.

"I'm Tom Rocket," replied the Robber, securing the pocket-book upon his person, "and what I mean, I say, and what I say, I stick to. Now, get up, and mind," he added, as my father sprang to his feet, "*my* pistols don't miss fire."

"I shall live to see you hanged," my father muttered, adjusting his disordered dress.

"Shall I help you to catch your horse?" Tom asked politely.

"I'll never rest till I lodge you in a jail," said my father, savagely.

"Give my compliments to your wife," said Tom, mounting his horse.

"Confound your impudence," howled my father.

"Good night," said Tom, with a wave of his hand, and turning sharp round, he jumped his horse over the fence and was out of sight in a moment.

It was not quite fair of my father, I must own (Mr. Josh continued, after a pause), but he determined to set a trap for Tom Rocket, baited with the five hundred guineas, at the bridge. He posted up to London, saw Bradshaw, a famous Bow-street runner, and arranged that he and his men should come down, and help to catch Tom; but, just at the last moment, Bradshaw was detained upon some important government trial, and so another runner, Fraser, a no less celebrated officer, took his place.

It was settled that the runners should come by different roads, and all meet at a way-side inn about five miles from the bridge, at eight o'clock p.m., on the day my father's pocket-book was to be returned. An hour afterwards they were to join him on the road, three miles further on. Their object, you see, in taking this round-about course was to baffle Tom's spies and accomplices, and to get securely hid about the appointed spot long before the appointed time.

My father was a little late at the place of meeting; but when he arrived there he could see no one about, except a loutish-looking countryman in a smock-frock, who was swinging on a gate hard by.

"Good noight, maister," said the yokel.

"Good night, to you," replied my father.

"Can ye tell me who this yer letter's for?" said the yokel, producing a folded paper.

My father saw in a moment that it was his own letter to Bradshaw.

"Where did you get that?" he said quickly.

"Ah!" replied the yokel, replacing it in his pocket, "that ud be tellins. Be yer expecting anybody?"

"What's that to you?" said my father.

"Oh, nought," said the yokel, "only a gentleman from London—"

"Ha!" cried my father; "what gentleman?"

"Will a name beginning with F. suit you?" asked the yokel.

"Fraser?" The word fell involuntarily from my father's lips.

"That's the name," replied the yokel, jumping down from his seat, and changing his tone and manner in a moment. "I'm Fraser, sir, and you're Mr. Sandiger, as has been robbed of a pocket-book containing valuable papers; and we're going to catch Tom Rocket as has got it—that's our game, sir. All right, sir, and now to business."

"But where are your men?" my father asked, when Fraser had explained the reason for his disguise.

"All right again, sir," said the runner, "they will join us. We have not much time to lose, so please to lead the way."

So my father led the way, followed by Fraser; and by the time that they came in sight of the bridge they had been joined by four London officers in different disguises, and from different directions. One appeared as a tramp, one as a pedlar, another as a gentleman's servant leading a horse, and the fourth as a soldier. No one could have guessed that they had met before, much less that they were engaged together in a pre-concerted scheme. My father gave Fraser great credit for the dexterous way in which he had collected his forces.

The bridge upon which the money was to be placed, consisted of two arches across the river, and was joined on either side by a long sort of causeway, built upon piles over meadows, that in the winter time were generally covered with water. It so happened, that the very next morning after the robbery heavy rain set in, and soon the floods were out, so that there was no way of getting on the bridge but by going along the causeway, which extended a distance of a hundred yards, sloping down gradually to the road, on each side of the river. This causeway was built of wood. At some places the timbers were covered with earth and stones, but at others the roadway had worn out and they were bare, so that anyone looking up from underneath, could see who was passing overhead. Mr. Fraser's sharp eye took in the position in a moment. He got two hurdles out of a field close by, and with some rope, that he had brought for another purpose, fastened them to the piles, so that they hung like shelves between the roadway and the flood, one at each side of the bridge, and about twenty yards from it. This was his plan : two of his men were to lie hidden on each hurdle, whilst he and my father, in a boat that was concealed beneath the main arch of the bridge, unseen themselves, could watch the heap of stones where the money was to be placed, and the stolen pocket-book left in exchange for it. As soon as Tom Rocket, or any of his friends, removed the bag in which the gold was packed, Fraser was to whistle, and his men were to climb from their hiding places and secure whoever it might be. If he leaped over the railing of the causeway, and took to the water, there was the boat in which to follow and capture him.

Mr. Fraser was very particular to practise his allies in

springing quickly from their place of concealment, and impressing upon them and my father the necessity of acting together, keeping careful watch, and strict silence. "And now, sir," he said to my father, as a distant clock chimed a quarter to twelve, "it's time to get to our place and to bait the trap, so please to hand me the bag that may mark it, and some of the coins, so as to be able to identify them at the trial." He had made up his mind, you see, to nail Master Tom this time.

My father gave him the bag, saw him write upon it, and make some scratches on about a dozen of the guineas, and then my father let himself down into the boat, in which he was immediately joined by the runner.

"It's all right," said Fraser, in a low tone.

"Do you think he will come?" whispered my father.

"Certain," replied Fraser, "but, hush! we must not talk, sir, time's up."

For three mortal hours did my father sit in that boat, and the runners lay stretched out on the broad of their backs upon those hurdles watching for Tom Rocket to come for his money; and for three mortal hours not a soul approached the bridge, not a sound but the wash of the swollen river was heard. By the time that the clock struck three, my father, who had been nodding for the last twenty minutes, fell fast asleep as he sat covered up in his cloak, for it was a bitter cold night; but was very speedily aroused by hearing Fraser cry out that they were adrift.

Adrift they were, sure enough. The rope that held them had been chafed against the sharp corner of a pile (so Mr. Fraser explained it) till it broke, and away went the boat, whirling round and round in the eddies of the

iver, fit to make any one giddy. So strong was the stream, that they were carried a mile and a half down it before they could get ashore. My father was for returning directly to the bridge, and so was Fraser; but somehow or other, they lost each other in the dark; and when my father arrived there, having run nearly all the way, he found, to his great surprise, that the officers had left. He rushed to the heap of stones, and there the first thing that caught his eye was his pocket-book—*the money was gone!*

Lord, how he did swear!

Determining to have it out with the runners for deserting their posts, he hurried on to the inn where they had met, and were to pass the night. He knocked at the door. No answer. He knocked again, louder. No answer. He was not in the very best of tempers, as you may guess; so he gave the door a big kick. In it flew; and a sight met his view that fairly took away his breath. Tied into five chairs, hand and foot, trussed up like so many Christmas turkeys, with five gags in their five mouths, and their five pair of eyes glaring at him, owlishly, sat the *real* Mr. Fraser and his four Bow Street runners. Tom Rocket had managed the business at the bridge himself!

How he managed to get scent of the plot, and to seize the officers, all together, just at the nick of time, my father never could find out, and no one knows to this day.

Upon examining his pocket-book, my father found all his documents, and a paper on which was written these words:—

“By destroying these writings I could have ruined you. In doing so, I should have injured your client, whom I

respect. For his sake I keep my word, though you have played me false. TOM ROCKET."

Here Mr. Josh paused, and smoked for some time in silence.

"And what became of Tom?" asked one of the company.

"Well," replied Mr. Josh, "after having been tried three times, and getting off upon some law quibble on each occasion, he—who had robbed the worth of thousands of pounds, and escaped—was executed at Nottingham for stealing an old bridle! And now I've done, gentlemen all. I looks to—wards you."

So our worthy president "looked to—wards us," and finished his brandy-and-water at a gulp. Then, finding that the rain had given over, we thanked him for his story, and all adjourned to the bowling-green.

“FROM INFORMATION I RECEIVED.”

IT is necessary for the purposes of this narrative that should take the reader into custody, and carry him before Mr. Oldbeke, the stipendiary magistrate of a nameless city, having many things in common with the nameless town wherein Messrs. Elephant and Castle dwell.

A police-court is not a savoury place at the best of times; but on a warm, wet, foggy November morning, when the great unwashed is present in unusual numbers, on account of the Irish row that has taken place the night before, and the atmosphere teems with odours, amongst which the concentrated essence of American overshoes and wet cotton umbrellas is the least offensive,—it is about as repulsive as a good walker could find in a day's march. Still, comfortless as is the accommodation, close and foul as is the air, there is that to be seen and learned by any one who will keep his mind's eye open in a police-court, which will more than requite him for what he may undergo in acquiring the information. The incident I have to recount is a very simple one, bat still it conveys a lesson that may be useful. Therefore, oh reader! I, your literary policeman X, seize you by an imaginary collar, and drag you along, in the spirit, ruthlessly, until I deposit you upon a sup-

positious bench, from which you will have a full view of all the proceedings.

The magistrates have not come in yet, so we can look around us for a few minutes. All those people whom you see huddled up together in the gallery are the admirers and sympathising friends of the prisoners who are to be brought up this morning. They are mostly women, because the prisoners are mostly men; and because, when a woman visits a court of justice, either as a principal or an amateur, she is always accompanied by at least two friends of her own sex to back her up, and see fair play. That sharp-looking, well-shaved man in plain clothes, sitting at a desk at the right of the dock, is the chief superintendent of the police. Does it strike you that he might find some better employment for his subordinates than keeping them here, lounging about the court? Why, there are twenty of them, at least, doing nothing! My dear sir, they are by no means idle. They are busy taking portraits. They are making mental photographs of every one around them. They will know you and me again this day twelvemonth. Every delinquent that stands at that bar will be remembered by some one of them, and watched when he comes out of gaol. It is thus that the criminal population becomes known to the police.

Ha! silence in court! Here comes the magistrates. That kind-looking middle-aged gentleman, who takes his place in the centre of the bench, is Mr. Oldbeke. Supporting him, on his right and left, sit two city justices. Below them, at the head of the table, where the attorneys who defend prisoners are assembling, sits their clerk, hotly besieged by a crowd of men, women, and children, more or less bruised or battered, who are applying for warrants

and summonses. One by one the applicants come forward, and state their grievances. The first wants a warrant against her husband, for breaking her arm with a poker. The next demands a summons against John Smith, for kicking his (the speaker's) little boy down-stairs. The next seeks to take criminal proceedings against Anne Jones, for “using her shamefully,” and is followed by Anne herself in the flesh (and very fleshy she is), who makes a counter-charge. Then it is recounted how Mary McDowd “up and shied” a quart pewter-pot at Julia O'Shothnessy's head, and cut her cheek open to the bone, merely because the “young man” of the said Mary offered to treat her (the said Julia) to a glass of whisky. We then hear from a policeman who comes forward with his head and face one mass of adhesive plasters, that hearing cries of murder proceeding from the “public” where the above occurrence took place, he entered, and found Mary and Julia rolling upon the floor, scratching and biting each other, whilst their respective sweethearts stood by encouraging them, and seeing fair play. That upon seizing hold of the combatants, and endeavouring to separate them, they forgot for the moment their private differences, and made common cause against the “polis.” That fifteen men present, in various stages of intoxication, joined in the row, knocked him (the unfortunate policeman) down, jumped upon his body, and belaboured his head with his staff, whilst Mary McDowd broke his nose with a flat-iron. These atrocities are listened to quietly, as though they were ordinary matters of course. Miss McDowd and her “young man” are taken into custody there and then; warrants are granted for the apprehension of such others of his assailants as the policeman can catch; and the court, after having disposed

of the "night charges"—that is to say, sending a miserable homeless urchin to prison for eight days for sleeping in a shed, and fining two rapid young gentlemen five shillings each for being drunk and disorderly—proceeds to hear the cases of felony committed since yesterday morning.

"Put up John Jones," says the clerk.

A good-looking boy of fourteen appears in the dock, and a fidgetty little man, dressed in black, hustled into the witness-box. He tells his story as though he were Mr. Charles Matthews singing a "patter-song" of which he has not yet learned the words. He has finished it, and stands gasping for breath, before Mr. Oldbeke has opened his note-book, to take down his name and evidence. He is told to begin again, and he obeys, starting off at the same railway speed as before, puffing, spluttering, and gesticulating wildly. After some difficulty he is made to moderate his pace, and subdue his excitement, and then it appears that, as he was walking into town to his business, he stopped at a stationer's shop-window to see the new number of the *WELCOME GUEST*; that, whilst he was admiring the illustrations, he felt a tug at his coat-pocket; that, upon looking round, he saw a boy (the prisoner at the bar) running away, and that, upon feeling in his pocket he missed his purse.

"Anything known about this boy?" asks Mr. Oldbeke.

"No sir," replies the superintendent; "nothing."

"Has the purse been found?"

"No, sir," replies a policeman, entering the witness-box. "I took the prisoner into custody; he had been caught by the prosecutor. I took him to the station, where he was searched. I found on him the piece of

string, the knife, the half-apple, and the twopence-half-penny in copper, which I now produce ;” and the man in blue laid these articles upon the ledge before him, with the air of one who has just solved a great problem.

“Hum—m,” replied Mr. Oldbeke, putting down his pen and settling his spectacles. “Now, Mister-rer”—referring to his note-book, “Mister-r Brown, attend to me.”

“Yessir—Iamsir—attendingtoyousir.”

“Very well—but don’t interrupt me.”

“Nosir—Iwon’tsir.”

“Now, how long before you felt this tug at your pocket did you know that you had your purse safe?”

“Oh sir—Ihaditquitesafesir,” spluttered Mr. Smith, relapsing into his former state of rapid utterance and excitement.

“Perhaps,” continued the magistrate, “but that is no answer to my question. How long before you felt the tug, did you know that you had it safe?”

“Howlongsir?”

“Yes, yes—man, you understand me well enough—how long?”

“Wellsir—Ireallydon’tknowsir—that is I am perfectly certainto sursir—whysir Mary Jane sirthat’smywifesir—knows it to be true sirsir—that—I—always do put it in my pocket sirsir—whenever I go out yourworshipsir.”

“Can—you—swear—Brown,” said Mr. Oldbeke, shaking his head at the witness, “that—you—put your purse into your pocket when you left your house this morning? Now, sir, yes or no.”

“Yes, sis—I mean no, sir.”

“Now really, Mr. Brown,” replied the careful magis-

trate, leaning back in his chair, " how can you expect that I am to believe you if you say one thing and then another. Just try and collect yourself, and think."

" Wellsir—I could almost swear sir—I put it in my pocket sir—I always do."

" *You always do!* That is not enough for me. Your purse may be at your house in another coat, or on the table for anything that I know at this moment. *I always* put my watch in my fob, and just now when I felt for it, and missed it, I thought as you think now, that I had been robbed. But after a moment's calm reflection I remembered *that I had left it in one of the ornaments on the mantel-piece in my dressing-room.*" At this moment there was a slight stir in the gallery.

" One more question, Mr. Brown," continued the magistrate: " where did you catch this boy ?"

" At the corner of King Street, sir."

" How far is that from where you felt the tug at your pocket ?"

" About a quarter of a mile, sir."

" You ran after the prisoner all that way ?"

" Yes, sir."

" How many times did you lose sight of him ?"

" Four or five times, sir."

" And how many corners did he turn ?"

" Let me see, sir, one—two—three—four—five—six—seven, sir."

" Now, how do you know that the boy you caught was the same boy you had started after ?"

" Because he was running away, sir."

" Is that your only reason ?"

" Yes, sir."

"So you ran after a boy for a quarter of a mile—lost sight of him four times—turned seven corners (thus missing him eleven times in all)—seize upon the first lad you find running, and bring him here?"

"Yes, sir," replied the unabashed Mr. Brown.

"Then you may take him away again. The prisoner is discharged.

* * * * *

Mr. Oldbeke proceeds with his day's work in the Police Court, and Mrs. Oldbeke attends to her household duties in the pretty suburban villa in which the worthy magistrate resides. Just as she has finished ordering his dinner, a nice-looking youth, bearing a brace of pheasants and a hare, rings at the front door, and desires to see her.

"Oh, if you please, ma'am," says the nice-looking youth, "Captain Sampson sent me to the court with this game for Mr. Oldbeke, as he did not know his private address, and Mr. Oldbeke desired me to take it home for him ; and Mr. Oldbeke says, would you be good enough to send his watch, *which he has left in one of the ornaments on the mantel-piece in his dressing-room.*"

"Here, Jane," says Mrs. Oldbeke, "take this game down into the larder, and then run up to your master's dressing-room and get his watch—he forgot to put it on this morning—and give it to this young man, Jane ; and mind," turning to the nice-looking youth, "that you take great care of it, for it is a very valuable and favourite one."

So the game is put away, the watch brought down, and the nice-looking youth minds and takes great care of it.

* * * * *

[*Scene—The villa of Mr. OLDBEKE. Time, 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Enter Mr. OLDBEKE from the Police Court. To him—as we read in the old comedies—his wife.*]]

Mrs. Oldbeke. "How inconvenienced you must have been without you watch, my dear."

Mr. Oldbeke. "Ah! that I was, indeed; but it was all my own fault."

Mrs. Oldbeke. "I have been to see that dear little Mrs. Wrosebud, and her sweet baby. She is to come down to-morrow, so I think I shall send her one of those pheasants."

Mr. Oldbeke. "Pheasants!—what pheasants?"

Mrs. Oldbeke. "Why, those Captain Sampson sent."

Mr. Oldbeke. "Upon my word, it is very civil of him; how many did he send?"

Mrs. Oldbeke. "One brace and a hare. Did you not see them when you spoke to the messenger?"

Mr. Oldbeke. "What messenger?"

Mrs. Oldbeke. "Dear me! how dense you are to-day. The young man you sent for you watch."

Mr. Oldbeke (astonished). "Sent for my watch?"

Mrs. Oldbeke. "Now, Oldbeke, don't tease. It is well that you remembered to tell him where you had left it, otherwise we should never have found it."

Mr. Oldbeke (eagerly). "What, w—hat d—did he say?"

Mrs. Oldbeke. "That we should find it in one of the ornaments on the mantel-piece in your dressing-room."

Mr. Oldbeke (sinking into a chair). "My very words!"

Mrs. Oldbeke. "What is the matter? What do you mean?"

Mr. Oldbeke. "Simply this, my love—that I was foolish

enough to use those words in open court, and that some scoundrel has made use of them to obtain my watch."

[*Tableau.*]

Mrs. Oldbeke (after a variety of exclamations, and a long pause). "But the game! Do you think that Captain Sampson really sent it?"

Mr. Oldbeke. "We shall see. If he did not, it may afford a clue to the thief. Don't say anything more about it, my dear. Let Jane go down to the detective office after dinner, and describe the person of the young man; and now I think I'll go and wash my hands."

* * * * *

Next day Mr. Oldbeke proceeds with his work at the Police Court, and Mrs. Oldbeke attends to her household duties. Just as she has finished ordering dinner, a "Hansom" cab drives up at a furious pace, stops at the door, a short burley man springs out, rings the bell and demands to see "the lady."

"I'm a detective officer, ma'am," said the burley man, "my name's Lagger—here's my card. From information I received, I apprehended the young man who stole Mr. Oldbeke's watch, and from inquiries that I have made I find that he left here two pheasants and a hare. Am I right, mum?"

"Yes—yes; go on," replied Mrs. Oldbeke.

"There is a card with writing on it attached to the left hand leg of the hare. Am I right again, mum?"

"I think you are; but go on."

"The writing on that *hare* card corresponds with that in this *hare* book," and Mr. Lagger produced a greasy account-book. "Do I continue to speak what's correct, mum?"

"Supposing that you are—what then?" Mrs. Oldbeke was growing cautious.

"Why, mum, I must trouble you for the loan of them pheasants and the hare, to try and trace them where they was bought, and to produce them at the station agin the prisoner."

"But, my good man," said Mrs. Oldbeke, "I don't doubt you of course; but you know we have been taken in once already. How am I to be sure that you are really a policeman? Pray don't be offended, but——"

"Quite right, mum—quite right," replied Mr. Lagger, in a tone of high approbation. "I likes to see a lady sharp, and with her eye teeth about her like. You shall be sure that I am a policeman, though in plain clothes on account of this ere duty I'm on. I told you that I had got the thief, mum—but that aint all—I've got back Mr. Oldbeke's watch."

"Oh have you really! I am so glad."

"Should you know it again if you was to see it, mum?"

"Oh yes."

"Is this here it?" and Mr. Laggar dived into his capacious pocket, and dragged up the stolen watch by the chain.

"Now, mum," he continued, repouching the time-piece, after it had been identified by Mrs. Oldbeke, with many exclamations of delight at its recovery. "I think its pretty clear who *I* am."

"Oh yes, I'm quite convinced now; here Jane give the policeman the game, and, policeman, would you like to take anything to eat or drink?"

"Mrs. Oldbeke," replied Mr. Lagger, severely, "I never touches bite or sup when I'am on duty. *Good morning, mum.*"

"He is evidently a very intelligent and active officer," Mrs. Oldbeke remarked, as the door closed upon Mr. Lagger, and he drove off in his "Hansom" cab.

* * * * *

[*Scene—The villa of Mr. OLDBEKE. Time, 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Enter Mr. OLDBEKE, from the Police Court. To him his wife.]*

Mrs. Oldbeke. "Well, dear, I am so rejoiced that you have recovered it."

Mr. Oldbeke. "It? What's 'it'?"

Mrs. Oldbeke. "Why your watch to be sure."

Mr. Oldbeke. "But I have not recovered it."

Mrs. Oldbeke. "Then you have not seen Mr. Lagger the Detective?"

Mr. Oldbeke. "No—not to-day. I left court early, and have been at the club."

Mrs. Oldbeke. "Oh that accounts for it. He has caught the thief, and got back your watch. I saw it in his hand. He came for the game this afternoon, and took it away in order to trace it as you suggested."

Mr. Oldbeke. "Ha! that's all right, then."

Enter JANE.

Jane. "If you please, sir, Mr. Lagger, sir, wants to speak to you."

Mr. Oldbeke. "Show him in."

Enter LAGGER.

"Well, Lagger, what about my watch?"

[*On the appearance of Mr. L., who is a remarkably tall, quiet man, Mrs. OLDBEKE becomes greatly agitated.]*

Lagger. "No trace of it, sir, I'm sorry to say."

Mrs. Oldbeke. "I—is—t—this Mr. L—agger?"

Lagger (bowing politely). "At your service, madam."

Mrs. Oldbeke. "Then who was it that came to-day and took——"

Mr. Oldbeke (interrupting her, and perceiving what is coming). "I'll speak to you to-morrow, Lagger; never mind waiting now."

[Exit LAGGER.]

Mrs. Oldbeke (greatly agitated). "But Oldbeke, I conjure you——"

Mr. Oldbeke. "Don't, my love. I can see through this business at a glance. We have been taken in twice. The man who came to-day pretending to be a Detective, was an accomplice of the thief. They baited their trap with game to catch my watch—having caught it they have taken the bait away again—that's all."

[TABLEAU.]

Mrs. Oldbeke (recovering). "And the wretch held it in his hand before my eyes! Oh, it is unbearable!"

Mr. Oldbeke. "Don't talk about it, my love. It's gone, and there's an end of it. So now I think I'll go and wash my hands."

FORTUNE HUNTING.

CHAPTER I.

Gold ! gold ! gold ! gold !
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammer'd and roll'd ;
Heavy to get and light to hold ;
Hoarded, barter'd, bought and sold,
Stolen, borrow'd, squander'd, doled,
Spurn'd by the young, but hugg'd by the old
To the very verge of the churchyard mould ;
Price of many a crime untold,
Gold ! gold ! gold ! gold !
Good or bad a thousand fold.—Hoop.

GOLD.

“WHAT ! Marry a poor captain in a line regiment ?
Become a working soldier's drudge ? No, no, Mary, I
was born for better things than that.”

“Born,” said the young girl thus addressed, turning a pair of quiet, but wondrously expressive eyes full into her companion's countenance, “born, Minnie ?”

A crimson flush rolled like a wave over her companion's bosom, neck, and brow. She turned her face aside from Mary's searching gaze, and impatiently plucked to pieces the half-faded bouquet she had brought from the ball. For the time at which this story commences is three o'clock on a fine June morning ; the place is an elegantly fur-

nished bed-chamber, and the *dramatis personæ* as at present discovered are the two pretty girls to whom it belongs, Emmeline Tankerville and Mary Page her sworn friend, who, having been dancing since eleven o'clock on the previous night without intermission, have taken off their tattered ball dresses, dismissed their sleepy maid to her long coveted rest, and wrapped in the most captivating *negligés*, with their little tired feet thrust naked into tiny silk slippers, are reposing in a pair of deliciously easy chairs, discussing the affairs of the night, after the manner of young ladies returned from festive assemblies.

Oh, gallant young bachelors rolling homeward towards distant lodgings in Hansom cabs, smoking the early pipe in untidy chambers, or tossing about in your sleepless beds with the music of *that* valse throbbing in your fevered brain, do you never feel your ears burning about this witching time of morning? And which of those organs, I pray, tingles the most? That which is said to be affected when your lordship is flattered, or that which announces the painful fact that your perfections are not the theme of discourse? For I strongly suspect that some of these quiet-looking girls to whom we lords of the creation—masters of arts and sciences that we are—descend to utter our small talk, and whisper our soft nothings, make rare fun of some of us when they sit chatting away together in 'the grey morning, and we are fast asleep, dreaming of our conquests. But this is wandering—a bad habit that I have acquired—and that my readers must be good enough to pardon. I cannot keep to the high-road of my narrative, but find myself impelled into bye-lanes and nooks, and shady corners, where I sit down and dream and moralise, speculating about many

things that I had better leave alone, and thus losing much valuable time.

That certainly was an unlucky speech of Emmeline Tankerville's with which this tale commenced, and she felt it to be so, even before those sadly uttered words, "born, Minnie," fell upon her ear. For Miss Tankerville, the belle of the season, the rich, the flattered, whose diamonds are sparkling upon the toilette table, whose will knows no contradiction, was born in a little fusty house in Lambeth, where her father, principal clerk to Mr. Nye the drysalter, at eight-and-twenty shillings a week, denied himself the most ordinary comforts of life that he might pinch out of his scanty stipend the means of educating his children. Gay Tankerville was a *poor gentleman*; need I say more to tell what he endured, chained by that cruel despot, *Poverty*, for long weary years in crabbed old Nye's dingy back office in the city? People always called him "old Nye," or "crab Nye," when he was out of hearing.

Minnie had a little brother Frank, and sometimes when the long days set in, they would go down by one of the steamboats, in which somehow or other they got leave to travel gratis, to the city, call for their father, and walk home with him. Nye, who was not half as black as he was painted, saw the child, took a fancy to her, and often called her into his room for a five minutes' chat whilst her father was changing his coat. The old drysalter had spent more than half his life in India. On his return he found not kith, nor kin, nor friend to welcome him; and when one night he was found dead in his chair with his bible on his knee, and his will was opened, it was found that he had left all his savings to Minnie, then a blooming girl of seventeen; and his lucrative business to her

father, his hard-worked clerk. Minnie thus became a very rich lady, and a great catch for those who angle with grand names and coronets, and such like bait for anything from seventeen to seventy, that has got a hand and a purse to bestow. Minnie's father became a very great man, *i. e.* a very rich man, in the city, and her brother Frank was sent to a military school to prepare for obtaining a commission in the Guards, as befitted his property and the wealth of his family.

It is not the best class of society that a gentleman from the city can call around him by sheer force of taking a fine house, and giving splendid entertainments. Minnie was clever enough to see that she was surrounded by a crowd of fortune hunters, whose flatteries would have been equally fulsome had she been as ugly and awkward as she was pretty and graceful; and so she treated them accordingly. Minnie in a huge apron sweeping out the little house at Lambeth, or dressed proudly in a dark alpaga gown and straw bonnet to meet her father on a Saturday afternoon, found no one to tell that she was handsome and clever and good; but the perfections of Minnie with seventy thousand pounds in the funds were trumpeted forth upon the housetops, and yet she had the good sense, sharpened by many a conflict with her old foe, Poverty, to be well aware that she adorned the humble station she had left, much more than that into which she had so suddenly risen, and she despised the sycophants who buzzed around her. Ah! it was a sad thing that a pretty girl should become soured and dissatisfied with the world at seventeen: but so it was with Emmeline Tankerville.

'The only man of all the crowd of admiring swains that

frequented her father's house who never flattered her, but, on the contrary, told her many a disagreeable home-truth, was Captain Dudley. She could see through and through most of the fortune-hunters by whom she was besieged; but after two years' acquaintance she was obliged to confess to herself that she knew no more about that gallant officer's real sentiments and character than their first introduction taught her. What was hid beneath his cold, quiet manner? Had he a heart at all? Oh, yes! for more than once it had leaped up into his eyes, and his lips had poured forth a rich flow of tenderness that she felt was bearing her away, weak and trembling, into love for him. But then these utterances would be suddenly checked, and some cynical observation would fall with a jar upon her listening ear, and set all the previous harmony out of tune. Then how—without appearing to be blaming her for her flirtations and audacious disregard of appearances—with some half-dozen well-selected and calmly-uttered words, he would cut her to the very heart, and send her blood boiling through her veins! Sometimes he galled her to that degree that she could have struck him, as he stood with his impassive face before her. She always resolved that she would do the very thing that had called down his rebuke, on purpose to vex him—but she never did it. What right had he to dictate to her—what was her conduct to him? she would indignantly ask herself; and yet, as time passed on, she found herself leaning upon him for advice and assistance when beset with doubt or difficulty,—why, she could not tell, and then how kind, how brotherly he was! Ah! if he had but spoken once, before her heart became so steeled against all suitors, and, warned by cruel experience,

deemed every tender word a bid for her fortune, who can tell what might have happened? But as offer after offer was made, and suitor after suitor dismissed, his visits became less and less frequent; and for six months before the ball from which we find her just returned at the commence of this chapter, they had not seen each other.

Now this has been a necessary digression, and not one of those vague wanderings concerning which I have given notice. The while that it has taken you to peruse it, imagine that Miss Tankerville has sunk back in her chair, and is lost in a deep reverie with her hands clasped behind her head, and her eyes closed. And now see! she starts up as though some thought had stung her, and flinging herself upon her friend's bosom, weeps and sobs as though her heart were breaking. "Oh Mary, Mary?" she said, dashing her tears aside, "pity me, Mary. I am so utterly, so hopelessly miserable."

"My poor darling," murmured Mary, tenderly parting the tangled locks that fell across her face, which was now hid in her lap, as Emmeline knelt before her, "my poor darling, tell me what has happened, has Lord Tamperdure pro—?"

"Yes!" Emmeline almost screamed, starting to her feet, "he has proposed, and I have sold myself as completely as ever slave was sold, body and soul, I believe. Well, why not? it was sure to be so—so why should I not go to the highest bidder? A coronet! think of that, Mary—why do you look so pitiful? do you think it possible that a countess can be unhappy? ha! ha! ha!"

It was a sad failure that forced laugh of yours, Miss Tankerville!

"And Captain Dudley, Minnie?"

"Gone ; he is to sail for the Crimea on Saturday," said the unhappy girl, speaking with awful calmness, "and if ever man deliberately started to walk into his grave that man is George Dudley. Oh, why—why—why," she continued, wildly ; "but it matters not now, he was like the rest of them—oh, that money—that wretched, wretched money ! If I had only been free, Mary ; if I had but fair play!"

"Do you think you have acted fairly towards George Dudley, Emmeline?"

"Pshaw!"

"He loves you, Minnie ; on my life I believe he loves you dearly," Mary rejoined, in an earnest tone.

"For what I *have*—perhaps, not for what I *am*. Why, when I rejected him he went away without a word, and complained, like a chidden schoolboy, to my father."

"How do you know?"

"I saw him—do you suppose I took my eyes off him all night, I mean—I—how could I help seeing him ? He took papa aside, and whispered to him hurriedly ; then I saw by papa's flushed and excited manner that he had been abusing me, as they all do ; I shall hear all about it to-morrow."

"You are mistaken, Minnie," replied her friend ; "he is far too proud, too honourable to complain."

"I believe you love him," cried Emmeline, seizing her wrist with such force as to wring from her an involuntary cry of pain.

"No, Minnie," was the sad response, "I love him not ; but if I did, the brightest coronet that noble could offer would be too poor a bribe to win one thought away from such a man."

"Ah, yes, yes, yes," said Emmeline, vaguely, pressing her hands against her throbbing temples; "that is vastly well in theory, but in practice,—well, well, I have made my choice, God help me! and now, Mary dear, let me rest, I'm very, very weary. Do not let me see those flowers again, it would be wrong now, *he* gave them me. Good night, bless you." And so the conversation ended.

* * * * *

About noon the next day, when Miss Tankerville descended, she found her father pacing up and down the drawing-room pale and agitated. He stopped suddenly as she entered, and, taking her hand, softly said—

"I've bad news for you, my child."

"Oh, tell me at once, what do you mean?"

"In the first place, Frank is ordered to embark for the Crimea on Saturday."

"Oh, father, if he should be killed!"

Emmeline fondly loved her brother, and this was the first unconsidered outburst of her affection. Another moment, and she drew herself up with sparkling eyes—"Well, let him go," she said, proudly; "with brave men, in a just cause, and a good God to watch over him. What does he say?"

"He is only too glad of a chance of distinguishing himself; but, Minnie, I have not told you all."

"Go on, then, pray go on."

"Mr. Grere, your trustee"—

"Well, well."

"Has committed suicide."

"Good Heaven—how dreadful!"

"Having misappropriated and lost your fortune."

"What—all—all?"

"My poor, poor child," said Mr. Tankerville, taking her tenderly in his arms—"all."

"Thank God!" cried Emmeline, with a hysterical sob, sinking through his embrace to her knees—"oh, thank God—but are you sure—quite sure—it is true: who told you?"

"George Dudley."

"When—oh, speak, when?"

"Last night."

"Was it of this he was speaking to you in the conservatory?"

"It was, and the first thing this morning I sallied out to the city, and found that his intelligence was too true; Philip Grere is a bankrupt and self-murderer."

"Heaven forgive him," said Emmeline, rising. "Father, that money was my bane. *You* will not love me the less for my being poor, will you?"

"My darling"—and the good parent folded his child in his arms, and imprinted a loving kiss on her fair forehead.

"Now, excuse me for awhile," said Emmeline, extricating herself from his embrace. "I have something to do that must not be delayed."

She went straight to her boudoir and wrote, and sent the following note to Lord Tamperdure:—

"**MY LORD,**—

"Last night, you honoured me with a proposal of marriage, which I accepted conditionally, on your obtaining my father's sanction. Then, I was supposed to be in the possession of a large fortune. This morning has disclosed that I have not a penny, consequently, the Emmeline Tankerville of last night does not address you now. To a person of your lordship's—

perception, I need say no more, excepting this, that *I have not informed my father or brother of what took place between us last night*, but that they will be at home to receive you as you arranged, at three o'clock to-day. Yours faithfully,

EMMELINE TANKEEBVILLE."

A quarter to three chimed, and Minnie, pale and trembling, awaited the arrival of her titled lover. Three o'clock struck! Every carriage that passed down the street, every ring at the bell, every footfall upon the stairs, sent the blood surging and whirling through her head, as, with her right hand tightly pressed upon her heart, as though to check its wild throbings, she stood concealed amidst the heavy window-curtains, watching eagerly.

Half past three! She has tried to read to while away the time, but the letters are all bleared and dim—the book is thrown away, and she wanders restlessly up and down the house; still listening and starting at every sound.

Four o'clock! She has fallen into a deep reverie, with her face buried in her hands. Visions of her happy hard-worked youth rise before her, and half-waking, half-dreaming, she pictures to herself another home exhibiting a pleasant medium between the splendour in which she now sits, and the privations that she has endured, where a noble pale face lights up, radiant with smiles, as she enters. Hark! what is that?

Five o'clock, and no Lord Tamperdure.

She starts up, throws open her piano with a crash, and dashes off a wild bravura. Louder and louder rings out the exultant strain, and then it dies away, slowly—sadly—and when all is silent and they enter the room, they find that she has fainted, and has fallen forward, with her face resting upon the keys.

FORTUNE HUNTING.

CHAPTER II.

Hurrah ! we grip the Tyrant now !
And there's no heart so lowly
But burns to strike a battle-blow
And win a cause so holy.
They watch us now from out the West,
But all too proud to sorrow
For us who rest on Victory's breast
Or wear her wreath to-morrow.

GERALD MASSEY.

GLORY.

THE Summer has passed away, and the Autumn, and the reign of the mistletoe is over. The Christmas has been but a sad one. England is moody and anxious, and not a few of her hearths are hung with mourning, for the Alma has been crossed, Inkermann fight is over, and many, many of her bravest best-loved sons are dead and dying before the grim fortress that is yet to fall.

Emmeline Tankerville is feverishly anxious for intelligence from the seat of war, and for a day and a half before the arrival of each mail, the house in which she lives is an unquiet one. Has she not a loved brother in the army before Sebastopol, and is it not natural that she should be eager to hear of his welfare ? But wherefore—being assured of the great fact that he is alive and well—does she pore so over his letters, seeing that he hardly ever speaks about himself ? Ah why ? May it not be because they are all full of Dudley—what Dudley did, what Dudley thought, and what other people thought of Dudley. For Frank had struck up a warm friendship with the stern pale Major who had recently been promoted ; Emmeline's brother having a knack of winning his way into everybody's heart—the bright-eyed, pleasant boy.

Dudley was bitterly disappointed at his rejection by Emmeline. No one knew her faults—and their name was legion—better than he did, but no one saw so clearly as he *through* them into her real nature, and was more conscious what a sterling good heart it was after all. They were merely fungoid growths that time and gentle training would soon throw off, and he flattered himself that his was the task to remove them. She had certainly given him great encouragement, and had it not been for a morbid horror that he had of being taken for a fortune-hunter, he would have proposed for her long ago. But he was punctilious to a fault, and it was only when he heard that she had lost her fortune, that he came forward, and then he found that he had spoken too late. He sailed for the seat of war sorrowfully indeed, but not in the mock heroic state that Emmeline supposed. He was not the sort of man to go and get knocked on the head through pique, when his country required his services. No! he went out (having learned a useful lesson), did his duty like a gentleman and a soldier, and made no fuss about it. It was strange how he clung to Frank, though. The little Guardsman was not a bit like his tall, beautiful sister, but he was something belonging to her, and so the pair were inseparable. I think the Major had no objection to his young comrade's writing so much, and so often about him and his exploits (for he had distinguished himself more than once already); and as I have said, there was nothing but Dudley, Dudley, Dudley, in Frank Tankerville's letters home. Of the battle of Inkermann he wrote :

"He slept in my tent that night, and so was in the thick of it. It was he who first heard the rumble of the approaching

guns, and gave the alarm. It was he who fought like fifty devils in the battery, and spiked the guns when those rascally Turks turned tail and bolted. It was he who, when Bosquet's Zouaves came up and wavered, rallied them, and headed their decisive charge* that sent the Ruskies with their tails between their legs, and a troublesome domestic insect in their ear, back to Sebastopol. It was he (I am serious now) who saved my life. A fragment of a shell struck my sword just above the hilt, smashed it into atoms, and gave my wrist so bad a sprain that I could not use my revolver. The enemy was all round us, and the bayonet of a huge Cossack was just tickling the fifth button of my coatee (this was Frank's notion of being 'serious!') when Dudley's sword came down upon his helmet. I could hear the click as it passed through the metal, and down rolled the poor wretch with his skull cleft to the chin. By Jove! you had not much time to look about you, I can tell you; but it was grand to see George Dudley that day."

Frank never wrote about his own acts; but there are those who say that it was grand also to see the little Guardsman on that blood-stained hill side, as, bareheaded, with his light boyish curls waving in the morning breeze, and his bright eyes flashing like stars, he cheered and encouraged his men, and coolly as though practising in Angelo's school-room, gave point and parry the while, and fought for every inch of ground, as the squadrons of the Czar came swarming down the heights. It was a miracle that either of the friends escaped; but so they did, almost without a scratch.

Then the long weary months passed away, and the first attack upon the great Redan was made; and when the

* A Fact.—The final charge of the Zouaves was headed by three English officers.

disastrous news came home there was received this letter from Frank :—

“ George Dudley has fallen—I can hardly write the words—not in the great assault, but in a wretched skirmish in the trenches. I cannot write more. I am going to try and recover his body, to bury it.”

It was addressed to Mr. Tankerville ; but Emmeline, who had been fretting about the house for days before like an imprisoned leopardess, sprung at it, and tore it open the moment it arrived. She uttered no sound as it fell from her hand, but staggered away towards her own room, clinging to the banisters as though all strength had deserted her. She did not appear again for four days, and then she wore a black dress—seldom spoke and never smiled.

* * * * *

Another month has passed, and the news arrives that Frank may almost daily be expected home. He is to arrive at Southampton, and thither his father and what is left of the once stately Emmeline hasten to meet their hero.

Who can tell the hopes and the fears, the joys and the sorrows, of that anxious crowd of men and women, and little children, that crowd the pier where the expected steamer is to land her living freight? waiting to press their dear brave ones to their hearts of hearts, or to see some one who has seen them, and may bring a token that they are alive and remember them. No, no, those days of fierce expectant agony are passed, thank God! May it be long ere we see others like them!

The vessel has arrived, the gangway is lowered, and one

by one the hale and the wounded find their way ashore, and are borne away by exultant, or sympathising friends ; but no Frank appears. Mr. Tankerville and his daughter, with a chilling flutter creeping over their hearts, hurry on board the steamer to seek him. Oh joy ! they hear his voice in one of the cabins below. They hasten to the companion-ladder, and a ghastly spectacle meets their view. Stretched upon a mattress carried by four sailors, is the wreck of an officer. His left arm is gone altogether, his face is disfigured by a fearful seam not yet half healed, and a rifle ball has carried away part of his right lung, and now lies embedded in his side burning and throbbing away his life. His nearest relative would never have recognised in that haggard spectacle the once brilliant George Dudley, but the instinct of love tells Emmeline that it is he, and the next moment she is kneeling weeping by his side.

I have little more to tell ; with change of air and skilful treatment, and with—ladye fair, ask your gentle heart what other stimulant to recovery the brave fellow was likely to have ? George Dudley picked up strength and almost his old good looks again, greatly to the delight of some one, and the exultation of Frank. “Lord bless your heart,” he would exclaim, “the Ruskies *couldn’t* kill him ! We were very near being licked by the fever, but the Ruskies —pshaw ! he’ll take it out of them yet.”

But *Colonel* Dudley never had the chance. Peace came before he was fully restored to health, and then he had a duty to perform in the church of St. George, Hanover Square, in company with one Emmeline Tankerville (who never was heard of again, at least by that name) that will keep him out of the cannon’s mouth for some time to come. With C.B. to his name, the Victoria Cross on his breast,

and a loving wife in his house, he has had enough of *Glory*, and Emmeline, softened and vastly improved by the sorrows she has undergone, is a happy woman, and a proud mother. As for Frank! if after the atrocious manner in which he flirted with pretty Mary Page at the wedding, something dreadful does not happen to *him*, never call me a conjurer again.

VER Y I M P R U D E N T

"It *was* very imprudent ! very imprudent, indeed ! All their friends said so, and what everybody says, you know, must be true. Not but that John Claire is a very good fellow, well-born and educated, and all that sort of thing ; but—dear me ! Lizzie Clifton might have had her carriage and her establishment, time after time, if she had not been such a little goose. Just think of the sums that her father has expended upon her education and dress, and all that ; why, there was not a better-dressed girl in all London than Lizzie ! And yet, in spite of all advice and warning, she goes and flings herself away upon this young man—a barrister with expensive habits, no connection, and only two hundred a-year to live upon ! I've no patience with such folly ! He ought to be ashamed of himself, that he ought ! How can he afford her half the little luxuries to which the poor child has been accustomed ? Oh, it was very imprudent ! very im-prudent, in-deed !"

So mused the great world, when it read in its favourite morning newspaper of the marriage just alluded to ; and as the great world cannot praise or blame any person or thing without contrasting him, her, or it, with somebody or something else, it proceeded to throw out into bold re-

lief the folly of the newly-married Mr. and Mrs. John Claire, by parading in striking contrast the superior sagacity and splendour of some of their connections. "Look at Lizzie's cousin, Arabella, and see what *she* has got," would be the new variation; and then the great world went back to its old refrain—"It was very imprudent! ve-ry imprudent, indeed!"

It was a pleasant thing to "look at Lizzie's cousin, Arabella." Bell, we called her. Pleasant to see her trying to do the grand lady in her great house; pleasant to see her reclining in her splendid carriage, and trying to look unconcerned; pleasant to see her presiding at the sumptuous dinners which her husband was obliged to give to his city connections; pleasant to see her at her own merry little dances; but pleasantest of all to catch her alone, and to mark the childish glee with which she skipped about amongst her pretty things, and exhibited her wedding presents with the same air of wonder and delight with which, but a few years ago, she used to show us her new toys. I do not think that De Coursey Smith—Bella's husband, I mean—was as old as John Claire, and yet he was making his ten thousand a-year, whilst John —— well, poor fellow! he did all he could; but it must have seemed a great change for Lizzie to find herself in those splendid drawing-rooms of Bella's, after leaving her own stuffy lodging in Lamb's Conduit Street, when she went to pass the day with her cousin, soon after her return from Paris, where she had spent the honeymoon. There was something strange in John's manner as we walked home in the evening from Hyde Park Gardens, where the De Coursey Smiths lived (for Lizzie was not ashamed to say that her husband could not afford cabs,

and that therefore they would have to leave early); but I noticed that Lizzie—God bless her!—was more than usually tender towards him, and when we arrived at their lodgings, and John asked me in to smoke a pipe as in days of yore when we were bachelors together, she showed me some little articles of furniture that he had picked up at an auction, and made as much of them, simple as they were, as ever Bella made of her *bijouterie* and diamonds. Of course she wanted to show me that she was content and happy with what her husband could provide for her, and had no hankering after her cousin's beautiful things: the device was transparent enough, but it made us all very comfortable, notwithstanding.

I forgot to say how it was that Lizzie had no fortune. People used to say that she would have twenty thousand pounds when her father died; but when John Claire proposed for her, her father told him plainly that he had lived up to his income and had nothing to give her, but her share out of his insurances at his death; and when he died, which he did suddenly a few months after their marriage, it was found that this share, after deducting what was required to pay his debts, amounted exactly to three hundred pounds! I knew how it would be—it was so exactly what I should have expected from John and Lizzie. They never touched a farthing of the money, but transferred it all to the widow—(she was not Lizzie's own mother—her father had married again when she was sixteen)—who was left better provided for than they, but still was in greatly reduced circumstances.

It was about this time that I persuaded them—John and Lizzie, I mean—to take a little house in Bayswater, and to let me come and lodge with them. You see I am

an old-fashioned fellow, fond of my pipe and my book, and quiet enough in my habits, I think, not to be a nuisance to a young married couple. Besides, I used to be away half the year, fishing or shooting with this friend or that, for there are a good many people who like to have me in their country-houses when the long evenings set in, I can tell you. I paid them no more than I should have had to pay anybody else. I knew them too well to propose anything different, and it really was a comfort to me to know that my books and papers, and little odds and ends, were safe in Lizzie's charge, and not at the tender mercies of some horrible old landlady, who would bundle them all together into dirty heaps, under pretence of "tidying." Bah! how I hate the word! There is not a more orderly man than I am in the parish. I have not a single thing, from a gun-case to a shirt-stud, that has not its proper place, and is not in it; but yet, put a house-maid in my sanctum for ten minutes to "tidy" it, and it is in inextricable confusion for a month.

I thought that I knew Lizzie as well as it was possible to know any young woman; but I was mistaken. It was not until I had been about six months in the house with her and her husband that I began to find out what a real, sterling, downright good one she was. Whatever troubles, whatever disappointments—and their name was legion—beset John Claire, poor fellow! in his professional career, they were all shut out as soon as the door of his home closed upon him. His pretty house was his haven of refuge from all anxiety and sorrow. He had always a cheerful hearth, and a smiling Lizzie to welcome his return to it. A Lizzie always upon the watch to do something to please him—a Lizzie incessantly inventing

little pleasant surprises for him—a Lizzie with a pale face and wearing a turned gown, but a Lizzie who looked a thorough gentlewoman and was every inch an honest English wife. She had her worries—many of them ; but no matter how much she was vexed by servants, tradesmen, and other necessary household nuisances during the day, all traces of trouble were gone as soon as her husband's knock was heard. I cannot say so much for him ; he very often came home in wretched spirits, ate his dinner in moody silence—not noticing some little treat about which those good wifely hands had been busy the whole day long, and then would throw himself into a chair, and muse with knitted brows, sighing out, rather than speaking, short replies to Lizzie's endeavours to get him to converse upon some pleasant topic. The truth is, he had begun to despair. Like many another clever young man, he thought that he was going to take the world by storm. Was not William Pitt a minister of the crown at twenty-three ? Were not Scott and Erskine, luminaries in his own profession, once as poor and friendless as he ? Alas ! the world is not to be taken by storm now, as the great men just mentioned would find, perhaps, were they to have their time over again amongst us. And yet I think that we have accomplished two or three little things that will satisfy our great grandchildren, that we were not so much inferior to our great-grandfathers as certain *laudatores temporis acti* pretend.

No ! every profession is crammed full of clever men fit to hold its highest honours, the bar especially, as poor Claire found to his cost. Why, what could he expect ? Did he think that attorneys were to throw overboard men whom they had employed and trusted for years, and

whose abilities they had tested, and take all their business away from them, because a young gentleman with a handsome face and agreeable voice had taken chambers next the sky in Ivy-tree Court, Temple, and had painted up his name upon the door-posts below? Were they to be fascinated by that cognomen as they passed it on their way to the abodes of other counsel learned in the law, and compelled by some magic spell to entrust the voluminous briefs with which they are laden to the unknown aspirant up-stairs? Or was his appearance as he sat silent in the back benches of the courts in Westminster such as to warrant them in making any one of the advocates who spouted away in the front row change places with him? No! not a bit of it. Common sense tells us that such things cannot happen to other people; but when we think about ourselves, Vanity flies into one eye and Hope into the other, our vision becomes distorted, and we each think that we are the sole exceptions to the general rule.

John Claire had great disadvantages. He had been, before his engagement to Lizzie, an idle, ball-going, theatre-haunting, do-nothing, gay young man about town. He became about as hard-working a barrister as any in the profession: but, bless your heart! no one would believe that he had so changed. Whilst he was losing health and strength, working at his dull old books in those dreary chambers next the sky, his good friends and acquaintance went about talking of his imprudent marriage, and smiling derisively at the idea of his steadily down and earning a living.

I think, considering the affection that had existed between Lizzie and her cousin before their marriages, that Bella might have got her husband to do something

amongst his city connection for John. It was not bad-heartedness on her part, or forgetfulness even ; she often thought of asking him to exert his influence in the struggling man's behalf. But she was too ignorant of the world to know what could be done to help him. Consequently she could not ask for anything definite, and we all know that when people are going to do "something" for you, it means, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, that they are going to do *nothing* ! And so time wore on ; pretty Bella began to get a little worldly—how could she help it ?—and her husband was far too busy with his speculations in the city to think of anything or anybody but himself. Money was his god. He pursued gain eagerly—not along the beaten paths and safe avenues that older and wiser heads than his had followed ; but by short-cuts and by-ways, and dodgings of his own discovery. He laughed to scorn all old-fashioned modes of proceeding, and was daring, ingenious, and rich—very rich, richer and richer every day. But I don't think that Bella was happy after all.

It was about three weeks after his little boy was born, that John Claire brought home his first real brief. I cannot describe to you the joy and hope that those sheets of blue paper caused in our little home. It was good to see the honest flush of pride that mounted on his pale face as he flourished it exultingly before his gentle wife. It was good to see her try to look unconcerned in my presence, as though briefs with ten-guinea fees marked upon them were every day visitants in the third-floor back of Ivy-tree Court. It was good to see her showing it to baby, when she thought that no one was observing. She begged hard to be taken to Westminster Hall to hear John argue his

case, but that could not be. I went ; the cause came on late, and the judge was evidently tired and anxious to get away. He behaved very cruelly to John—he might have known that he was a beginner, and that interruptions would flurry him, and save no time after all. But he stopped him upon one point, and bade him go on upon another ; told him that this piece of evidence had nothing to do with the real point in dispute, and that that was not admissible ; and then after all, when he found that he was mistaken, and that what he thought was the real point was not the real point, he got angry, told John to recall his witnesses, and made it appear as though it was his fault—that they had not been asked the proper questions before. I was disgusted with him. What a contrast he was to the Chief Justice, before whom John appeared a few weeks afterwards to ask for a new trial—(for he lost his cause)—upon the ground that the judge who tried it had misdirected the jury ! He was, they told me, the greatest lawyer of the day, superior to the other in every respect ; and yet how courteous, and kind, and patient he was. Don't suppose I am praising him because he decided in John's favour. No ! I am very fond of John Claire, as I dare say you have discovered before now ; but I am not so infatuated as all that.

It was a long time before such another chance was given him, or that he earned such another fee, but “slow and sure wins the race,” and business began to drop in now and then, and John plucked up a good heart, was able to discharge some debts that were preying upon his mind, and was more cheerful with his little wife. Ah ! you may call me sentimental and all that, but there is nothing that knits the hearts of husband and wife so closely together as the

memory of privations undergone together, and difficulties surmounted hand in hand. Do you suppose that you would enjoy the prospect from the summit of Mont Blanc, if you were wound up by a patent crane in an arm chair, half as much as you would if you had toiled up over the snow and ice, knocked your shins against the boulder stones, and overcome all the perils and dangers of the ascent? Then, why should it not be so with the great rugged mountain of life? John Claire has a long climb before him ere he can get to anything like the top; but he has made good progress, can pause awhile, and take breath and look around him; and then, cheered by the sweet face that is ever encouraging and consoling him, plunge on manfully again, and stumble, and struggle, and rise. When I saw how happy they were, how tenderly he loved his good little wife, how proud she was of him and his boy, how thoroughly they understood each other, and how smooth and tranquil was their busy, useful life, I began to think that it was not so very, *very* imprudent after all.

It was about this time that the commercial world woke up one morning and found that a monetary earthquake had occurred during the night, and that a great many—too many notable “houses” were in ruins, and several others tottering in a most unsatisfactory condition, and threatening destruction to the neighbours. I am sorry to say that the establishment in which De Coursey Smith was a partner was found to have completely collapsed; and upon examination of the ruins, it became evident that they never had had any foundation at all.

I was shooting in Scotland when this happened, and Lizzie wrote and asked me if she might invite poor Bella (her husband had bolted to Boulogne without her) to

occupy my rooms whilst I was away, for there was to be an auction in the great house in Hyde Park Gardens, and all her pretty things were to be sold without reserve: everything was to go, even her trinkets, and the child's dresses. Of course, Lizzie might do what she pleased with my rooms, or with me either, for that matter; and Bella came, with her poor sickly baby, and took up her abode with my gentle-hearted friends. She was quite ruined—had not a shilling in the world. Well, the auction came on, and what do you think? Mrs. Lizzie goes out furtively that morning, with her quarter's allowance for dressing herself, and all her little savings, in her pocket, and she buys up all that baby's wardrobe, and its grand cot, and its silver mug and spoon, and lays them all out for it in the morning, as though nothing at all had happened! Oh, you women! who shall weave a plumb-line long enough to fathom the worth of some of you?

They tell me that John Claire is to have his silk gown next term, and that it is as sure as fate that he will lead the Southern Circuit if he lives five years. As it is, the great world pats him upon the back, and calls him a lucky man. Now, if there is one amongst us who can conscientiously say that he owes Fortune nothing, but, on the contrary, has an account on the other side of that fickle goddess's ledger, that one is John Claire. Sheer hard labour and dogged perseverance have made him what he is, will make him what he may be; but luck! no, no, unless it be in his choice of a wife, he never was a lucky man.

Now, it is not every young fellow who is a John Claire; and if any person will leave at the office of my publishers a clue to the whereabouts of another Lizzie Clifton, I shall

be eternally grateful to him. So it is pretty clear that it is not everybody who may marry upon two hundred a year, any more than any one may undertake the management of a balloon or a diving-bell, eat toasted cheese, or read George Sand, without danger ; but this I do think, and this I do say, that when a good man loves and is loved by a good girl, the best thing they can do is to marry. Not with any romantic nonsense about love in a cottage, but love in a kitchen, boiling the potatoes for dinner ; love in his place of business, working away to pay for them ; love making a cheerful home for love to return to ; and love returning to it cheerfully. Above all, let love avoid fault-finding, even though it should lie under his nose, and never, *never* go out hunting for it ; and depend upon it, that although it will be, of course, *very imprudent* at first, it will come all right in the end.

SEBASTOPOL VILLA.

SHOWING WHERE IT WAS BUILT, AND HOW, AND WHO TOOK IT, AND WHO WISHED HE HAD LEFT IT ALONE.

I ALWAYS do my best to earn a welcome at those houses where I—fortunate bachelor that I am—enjoy the privilege of being able to drop in when I like of an evening, for a cup of tea and a pleasant chat. So that, happening to be present when the new microscope, which my friend Jones had ordered as a present for his wife, came home ; and hearing that lady express a wish for a bottle full of the green slime of stagnant pools, “in which the *dear* animalcules and infusoria, about which Mr. Gosse writes so charmingly,” are to be found ; you may be sure that I took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded me of making myself acceptable. I promised my fair hostess that I would forthwith obtain for her a liberal supply of those interesting animals, to try her long-coveted instrument upon, and early the next morning I started off, like a man of my word, to procure them.

I can recall the time when I could have got what I wanted within half-a-mile of the Marble Arch, but those days have long since passed away. I remembered that when travelling by railway, I had passed through fields in the neighbourhood of—let us call the suburb—Whichstead, in which green ponds were still to be found, and thither-

wards I directed my course. An omnibus carried me as far as the turnpike-gate, and having strolled on, about half-a-mile along the high road, I came to a lane. I turned down this lane, and lo ! I was in the country. Looking northward—I could see nothing but fields and trees ; looking eastwards and westwards—nothing but trees and fields. I could not look to the south very far, because the railway embankment shut out the prospect. I might have been a hundred miles from London for anything of its noise, and bustle, and smoke, that I could perceive in that quiet spot. The hedges were in bud ; the birds were singing. There was a good crop of grass that would soon be mowed, in the field to my right. Over the stile, on the other side, a man in a smock frock was ploughing, and yet I was barely five miles from Oxford Street.

If I had gone there to moralise I could have done so at great length ; but I had come to catch animalcules for Mrs. Jones, and looking about I soon saw a pond—a green-coated, rush-fringed hole, with a small quantity of dirty water in it, a willow-tree at one end, and two boys fishing for efts with a worm tied to a piece of worsted, at the other. I quickly filled the bottles, which I had provided, with the richest slime, according to my instructions, and having added to these by purchasing from the juveniles a brace of the most loathsome of the reptiles they had captured, for my friend's aquarium, I retraced my steps ; and Mrs. Jones held microscopic *séances* every evening for a week.

I am quite incapable of describing the wonders that the learned lady disclosed to us. I only know, that, at last, we got a little tired of them—that the treasured green slime bottle, being left about one day, “ baby ” got hold

of it, and drank some—that the efts crawled out of their tank, and after having been hunted for, high and low, in vain, for a fortnight, were found at last baked quite dry in a crack in the hearth-stone—and that about three months afterwards, the animalcule mania having broken out again, I was asked if I *would* be so very kind as to fetch a fresh supply.

Again I put my bottles in my pocket; again I paced along the Whichstead road; again I turned the corner of the lane that had led me to my pond, fully expecting to find it as I had left it, with its willow tree at one end, and its two boys fishing for efts at the other, and, lo! I was in a town. Looking northward, I could see nothing but houses—houses built, and houses in course of erection; looking eastwards and westwards, nothing but houses in course of erection, and houses built. Looking to the south, the railway embankment shut out the prospect as before. The hedges were gone, so were the song-birds; the sharp click of the bricklayers' trowels was now the prevalent sound. The grass-field was turned into a square, laid out with flower-beds, and fenced with an iron railing. A bright, new, flaring public-house, just finished, with a huge flag waving from the roof, stood where my friend in the smock frock had “whistled at the plough.” Upon the very spot where I had seen the largest and most repulsive of my efts drawn wriggling from his muddy lair, was erected the threshold of “SEBASTOPOL VILLA!”

As I have to explain how this remarkably sudden change came about, the sooner I set about doing so the better. The land belonged to the trustees of a Charity, and they wanted to make money of it. Mr. Specie, the great contractor, had plenty of money, and wanted to

sink some of it in land. The deeds were executed, the consideration paid, and to Peter Specie, Esq., was duly conveyed the grass-field, and the ploughed land, with their, and all and every of their fences, walls, ditches, water-courses, mines, minerals, tenements, and hereditaments ; and also the pond and the willow-tree, with their, and all and every of their efts, newts, rushes, tadpoles, animalcule, caterpillars, and earwigs thereunto belonging or in any way pertaining : to have and to hold unto him the said Peter Specie and his heirs for ever.

Having obtained possession, the new landlord stuck up, upon every part of his property that could be seen from the road, huge boards, upon which was legibly painted the information that eligible plots of land were to be let on building leases. What says the old saw !—“ Fools build houses for wise men to live in.” Peter Specie did not build houses—not he ! One of the people who *did* commit this folly was Joe Price. Joe was a carpenter, a clever steady workman ; a man who could bring home his two pounds every Saturday night, without stopping at the ale house ; a man with a pleasant wife, healthy children, and a snug little home to live in. A man who had not a care in the world, until one unlucky day he was given a large contract, which he was obliged to engage a good many journeymen to complete, and which, when completed, brought him in a profit of four hundred pounds. Nothing would do after this but that Joe should become a builder and make his fortune. So he became one of that class of persons to which Mr. Peter Specie did not belong, and built SEBASTOPOL VILLA.

It was not everybody who could get the better of Joe Price, the carpenter. He was a sharp fellow. But Mr.

Joseph Price, the builder, having got out of his depth, was taken in right and left. His own four hundred pounds, and another two hundred that he borrowed of his wife's father, were gone before the second floor of Sebastopol villa was laid. What was to be done? Why the old plan, of course! He mortgaged the first and second floors to Mr. Peter Specie for the means to build the third; and when he had completed that, he pledged it, in like manner, for the sum required to pay for the roofing-in; and when that was done, he had to raise money upon the house as it stood, for paper-hanging, decorating, and rendering it fit for the reception of a tenant. So that, after providing for the payment of interest upon his various loans—supposing the house to be let as soon as the paint was dry, and the rent was paid punctually, from that day forward to the expiration of his lease—he owed as much as the house was worth: Mr. Specie knew better than to let him owe more. Fortunately for poor Joe, a tenant was found soon after the paint became dry, and his name was Honiton Smith, of the Inner Temple, Esq., Barrister-at-law.

Honiton Smith had a fair practice at the bar—as practices go now-a-days; and having arranged preliminaries with a pretty girl in his own position in life, he married her at once, like a sensible fellow, instead of wearing out her heart, and her roses, with a long engagement. But, unlike a sensible fellow, instead of taking her to substantial lodgings, where they could save up capital for commencing housekeeping, he took Sebastopol Villa, and hired his furniture from Veneer, Shoddy, and Co. The arrangement was in this wise:—Messrs. Veneer, Shoddy, and Company, of the great furnishing warehouse, were to

supply every thing, from an egg-saucepan to a pier-glass, and Smith was to give them his bill at six months for the amount. When this became due he was to pay them £50, and give another six months' bill for the residue, and so on, paying £100 a-year until the debt and interest thereon at five per cent. was paid.

It was really surprising all that Messrs. Veneer, Shoddy, and Company did for £500. Of course that did not furnish the *whole* of the house, only so much of it as the young couple required to use, and everything was ready for them upon their return from their honeymoon. Pretty Katey Smith's pride and delight was worth witnessing. She danced for glee in her spick and span new drawing-room, kissed the carpet and glasses for very delight, and then flung her arms about her husband's neck, and called him a dear precious old darling, and laughed, and cried, and declared that she did not deserve all his kindness, and was guilty of other pieces of affectionate folly such as many other young wives—God bless them!—have committed before, and will do again, if we men continue to be worth our salt.

They had not been settled more than a month in their bran new home, when it became evident that there was something upon the little lady's mind. At last it came out. Honiton must give her leave to have a housewarming—he must indeed! Their friends had made so much of them, they must really give some return; besides—and if Honiton had had a heart of ice, it must have melted when his pretty wife told him with a little injured sigh that "the girls" had not seen half her new things yet. This was decisive. Honiton Smith gave way; but "mind," he said severely, laying aside the man and

assuming the householder,—“mind you do not invite too many.” Katey assured him that it should “only be a little dance,” and there the discussion ended.

We all know what “only a little dance” means. Poor Katey! She calculated that half the elderly people she invited for propriety’s sake would decline; but they, “rather than offend the young folks,” committed self-sacrifice and came. Then Katey discovered that twenty dancing girls had accepted, and that she had only invited fifteen men upon whom she could count as partners for them. Honiton had asked a number of clients and brother barristers—persons of no use whatever in a ball-room—without telling her, and the question whether there would be room and supper enough for all became a pertinent one. The eventful night arrived, and a crush of guests poured into the drawing-room of Sebastopol Villa, such as Joe Price had never contemplated in settling the strength of his joists. At the height of the festivities,—when good little Katey’s nervousness was worn off, and she began to think that really things were not going so badly, after all,—in the middle of the last galop before supper,—when the jellies and creams and cakes, the chickens with their legs and wings cut off, and tied on again with blue ribbons, were laid out for that repast,—when the hired plate and glass were shining their brightest,—when the table was, as the man from the confectioner’s declared, “quite a pictur’ to look at,”—when the dance was going on gaily above, and the first instalment of “married people” had just taken their places at the festive board,—*smash!* came a boot and a black-trousered leg through the ceiling, close to the chandelier; and then, *SMASH!*!—*CRASH!!*—down came chandelier, ceiling, and all upon

the supper table, breaking it down and burying all its glittering and savoury contents in one mass of chalky desolation.

Words cannot paint the scene that followed. The ladies shrieked and fled into the garden, thinking that the house itself was coming down. It was as much as three men could do to drag the unfortunate youth, whose vigorous dancing had finished Mr. Price's flooring, out of his hole. No one would enter drawing or dining-room again. The guests could not all be huddled into wretched Katey's bed-chamber, and there was nowhere else to put them. A full hour must elapse before the earliest-ordered carriage would arrive. To make matters worse, it began to rain, so that the most nervous of the guests, who had retreated into the garden, were driven back into the hall, and there added to the confusion by assuring each other at every sound that the roof was falling in. At last cabs were procured, the dispirited assembly melted away, and the angry master and weeping mistress of Sebastopol villa were left alone.

The next day Price was sent for; Smith, the crest-fallen, would have it out with *him*, at any rate; but to his indignation it was the builder who assumed the injured innocent. What had they bin up to? Darncing! What business had they to get darncing in his house? Fifty pound houses like that warn't built for *darncing!* Worn't there a clause in their agreement agin balls, and parties, and sich like goings on. No, there wornt? Yes, but there was though, and that Mr. Smith should find. Honiton had forgotten all about the prohibitory covenant, and had to pay for the necessary repairs out of his own

pocket. Mr. Price was right : Sebastopol Villa was clearly "not built for dancing."

The builder's account for a new ceiling, floor, and joists mounted up to £40 ; the confectioner's bill for broken glass and damaged silver was £32, besides the cost of the supper which was spoilt. When all this was paid, poor Smith had but little of his savings left to go towards making up the £50, the first instalment of the £500 due to Messrs. Veneer, Shoddy, and Co. I have said that the dining-room table was broken down by the fall of the ceiling. The fracture disclosed that it was a rotten, worthless article, just French polished up for sale. A respectable upholsterer was called in, and reported that all the furniture in the house was of the same description. Time passed, and his forebodings were confirmed. The chairs broke when sat upon, the carpets wore out, the curtains faded, and in little more than a year distressing signs of seediness appeared in every room. Smith expostulated with the great furnishing firm, and the great furnishing firm turned round upon him insolently, and demanded what right he had to find fault, when his last instalment was in arrear ? Smith persisted, and Veneer and Co. blustered, threatening to sue him. Smith took heart of grace, swore he would defend the action, and dared them to proceed. Veneer and Co. were cowed, and eventually released their entire claim upon Smith's father paying them £300. The real worth of the goods they had sold was not three hundred pence !

But the troubles of the newly-married pair did not begin or end here. Not very long after the disastrous "little dance," Smith woke up one morning with a violent

cold in his head. "Why bless my heart, my love, what's that?" he exclaimed between his sneezes, as a bright flash of light fell upon his face. He turned round in bed, and there, close to the pillow, was a crack in the wall into which he could thrust his hand! The fact was that Mr. Peter Specie had not filled up my pond as solidly as he should have done, and, in consequence, the foundations of the house had "settled." This time it was clearly the landlord's duty to make the repairs, but Joe Price had fallen into trouble, and was on the verge of bankruptcy. He could not afford to take the necessary steps for stopping the damage, so he merely plugged up the crack with cement, and left things to take their chance. Winter set in, and they soon found that Sebastopol Villa was neither wind, rain, nor cold proof. It looked very pretty in the summer. Its plate-glass windows were imposing; its stuccoed front was unimpeachable; its marble mantel-pieces and fancy grates were apparently first-rate. But then the wet came through the roof, the doors warped and let in the draught, and the sashes of the windows would not fit. Added to this, the walls were very, very thin, and afforded little shelter against the piercing north-east wind, to which the house was exposed. Moreover, being papered before they were quite dry, the paper now began to peel off in strips, which hung down, and waved about mournfully in the currents of air that rushed in and out of the rooms. Poor Katey Smith did not jump for joy in her drawing-room now.

Christmas came, and Joe Price himself was in the *Gazette*. He had tried other building speculations, had run up other "jerry-built" houses, and had failed utterly, hopelessly. Mr. Peter Specie seized his houses, including Sebastopol Villa, for the ground-rent, and let them to

people who believed in cheap tenements. Honiton Smith did not long continue his tenant. He saw with grief that his good little wife's cheek grew paler and paler every day.

One morning, as he was taking leave of her to go into his chambers, he put his arm round her, and drawing the gentle face close to his own, said softly, "Katey, are you very fond of housekeeping?"

"No, dear!" she said, looking down, tying and untying knots in her apron cords, "not very."

"Should you much mind our giving up this place, and going into lodgings for a year or two, until we can afford to hire a really good house, and furnish it comfortably?"

"Oh, Honey!" was the joyous reply, "I'd have asked you to do so months ago, but I feared it might pain you."

* * * * *

Within two years the Smiths had a house of their own again, thanks to Honiton's increasing parliamentary practice; but you may depend upon it that it was not built by a Price, nor furnished by a Veneer, Shoddy, and Co.

Sebastopol Villa is To BE LET. If the public will take my advice, it will remain so.

THE TWO LANDLORDS.

A VILLAGE SKETCH.

IT was a sad day for us all, that on which we heard that good, old Mr. Waylett was dying ; and a sadder one still when we followed him—for every man, woman, and child in the village, *did* follow him—to the grave.

He had lived—so I have been told, for I was quite a boy when he died—twenty years, within a day or two, on his estate, part of which was the village where my youth was spent, and had never left it. There he remained summer and winter ; there his money was spent, and there his kind heart won him an united circle of warm though humble friends. Therefore, as I said before, it was a sad day in Tarnbridge when our good old Squire died.

He was as generous and as hospitable as a prince (not that princes, as a class, are so very hospitable and generous, but so the saying is), having made a large fortune out of a great London brewery. He subscribed largely to all the county charities, and I am afraid to say how many gallons of good nourishing soup were made every Saturday at the Grange—Tarnbridge Grange was his house—for any one who chose to fetch away his pot-full. I don't

suppose that he got a hundred a-year out of our village, though every house and cottage belonged to him. He gave away so much, and the rents were so low, and he was not the gentleman to turn a poor fellow out of his home because he was a pound or two behind-hand. What was it to him? he had plenty, and to spare. Peace and good will were what he wanted, and peace and good will he had !

He was not popular with the neighbouring landowners, though,—far from it. In the first place, he would not preserve game upon his estate, and anybody might shoot a partridge or a pheasant, or knock a rabbit or a hare upon the head—not that there were very many of them about—and cook it for dinner, for anything he cared. He always had a good word for tramps and poachers at petty sessions—for he was a justice of the peace—and if there was the slightest doubt of a man's guilt, he would do his best to give him a chance of escaping from the ignominy and contamination of a gaol, and of redeeming his character. Oh, he had a gentle heart, had the Squire !

Nevertheless, young as I was, it struck me when I heard my father and his cronies talking, on the evening of the funeral, over all that he had done for us, that there must be something wrong somewhere, for, notwithstanding the sums he had spent upon us, we did not seem to have profited much. There was just as much poverty and sorrow about when he was laid in his grave, as had existed twenty years before, when he first took possession of the estate ; and I shall never forget the surprise with which we heard that his affairs were in a sad state of confusion, and that the Grange and the land would have to be sold to pay his debts, and that nothing would be left after-

wards to provide for his son and daughter. Mrs. Waylett had been dead several years, and the Squire never married again.

Ambrose Waylett, the son, was not a nice lad. He was proud and overbearing, and thought too much of himself to please me. He was at Oxford, being educated for the church, for there was a good living in the family. But that had to be sold, too. Miss Grace we all loved dearly. She—God bless her—took after her father, and was as kind and true a young English lady as ever breathed; and that is saying a good deal as times go. So that, when we heard that she had to go out as a governess to earn her daily bread, there was not a dry eye in the whole village.

Sorely did we miss the good Squire and his daughter, when the old Grange was locked up, and its windows closed; and sadly did we look upon its closed doors and smokeless chimneys, as it stood like a dead thing upon the hill-side, looking down upon the quiet churchyard where its once generous and hospitable master lay.

It did not long remain untenanted. News soon arrived that it had been taken, and would soon be occupied. A lord—a poor lord, they said, had purchased the estate as an investment, and was determined to make an income out of it. The first evidence we had of the coming change in our condition and prospects was the arrival of a solicitor and land agent from London. They went over the property with the steward, re-valued every farm and house upon it, and fixed what amount of rent must henceforth be paid. More than this, all the game was to be strictly preserved, and some poor people who, from not having been called upon to pay rent for many years, had begun to consider that they held their cottages free, were for-

cibly ejected. I cannot tell you how dismayed and disgusted we all were—what rebellious thoughts we harboured, and how we despised the four fellows who had consented to enter the new landlord's service as game-keepers—keepers to protect from us our own property, for so we considered the wild beasts and birds. The plumber and the carpenter had offers to join the London workmen who were coming down to put the Grange in order—to make it habitable, the lord's agent said—just as though, being good enough for dear Mr. Waylett, it was not good enough for any lord in the land! But they refused, and we applauded them for so doing. They were not going to be parties to turning the old place out of windows, and Frenchifying it (Lord Wanderville, that was the title of the new comer, had been living abroad). It was a desecration to meddle with it as it stood, and if he wanted to do so he must get some one else; *they* were not the men to help him. So high ran the feelings of affection for the old Squire, and of animosity against his successor.

Well, down came Lord Wanderville, and not alone; his sister, Lady Mabel, came with him. Such a grand lady such silks and laces did she flaunt in our faces! such foreign airs and graces did she put on! She was not like anything that we had ever seen before, and our woman-kind were quite disgusted with her first appearance in church in her French bonnet all off her head, and her hair turned back and frizzed about her forehead in little curls. But I must confess I thought she looked very pretty for all that. I was half sorry for her as she walked down the churchyard path after the service, on her brother's arm, through a line of sullen villagers, and not a hat was touch'd word of welcome spoken. Lord Wan-

derville's pale face flushed up at the palpable affront. He was quite a young man, not more than five or six and twenty ; but he had, oh ! such a firm grey eye, and there was something about the lower part of his face that said as plainly as though he spoke it, "I am your master, my friends, and what I mean to do I'll do." It was just as he entered his carriage that we hissed the new game-keepers. He rose, and was about to say something, when his sister laid her hand upon his arm, and said something in a whisper, so he sat down, and was driven away quickly, or I verily believe we should have hissed him.

It was intimated that the soup would be made on Saturday as usual, but we were to pay for it. Pay an earl for a pint of soup ! We were not asked its value, or anything like it—but we were to *pay*. We thought that we had never heard of such meanness. Not one single drop was asked for !

There was a Board of Health, or something of that kind, that managed our local affairs, or rather left them alone. We knew nothing about it until Lord Wanderville used it against us. A good deal of muck of one sort or another was piled about in heaps at the back of houses and corners of roads. He got an order to have it all removed and taken up to his farm. He paid for it certainly ; but we bitterly resented such interference with our private affairs ; what right had he to meddle with other folks' muck ? He began to build a good many cottages, and very nice cottages they were, pleasantly situated, well built and drained, and with plenty of water laid on. These were all intended for his own people that he was going to bring down, so it was said, not for us. Then his sister, Lady Mabel, what must she do but go, the very first time she

cibly ejected. I cannot tell you how gusted we all were—what rebellious boured, and how we despised the f consented to enter the new landlo keepers—keepers to protect from u so we considered the wild beasts a and the carpenter had offers to jo who were coming down to put make it habitable, the lord's a being good enough for dear M enough for any lord in the l we applauded them for so to be parties to turning th Frenchifying it (Lord W the new comer, had been cration to meddle with do so he must get som to help him. So hig old Squire, and of a

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of honour in the hall.

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ing that Lord Wanderville would be the
question on Saturday afternoon, when he
ished the tenants to meet him, as he had so
communicate to them.

Saturday afternoon came, and the Earl—cold and stern
usual—stood in the centre of a circle of dark and
cowling faces. I had heard several men declare loudly
what they should “up and tell him to his face;” but
somehow or other no one spoke.

“I have given you notice to quit,” his lordship began,
“because I am going to pull down these cottages!”

A murmur ran round the assemblage. Pull them down!
it was bad enough to turn people from their homes where
some happy days had been passed, but wantonly to destroy
them—that was too bad.

“Now I will tell you why I am going to do this,” Lord
Wanderville continued. “I am told that you have suffered
here very much from the fever. Is that so?”

“Yes!” said a voice, “and some of us are down with
it now, and not fit for flitting.”

"I am also informed that the fever, which sometimes goes all through the village every autumn, invariably begins here." He was going then to punish us for this, thought many a one.

"Well, if it does, that's our misfortune not our fault; we cannot help it," replied the speaker as before, who, by common consent and his own pluck, was constituted spokesman for the rest.

"I am not so sure of that," was the reply.

"It is God's wrath upon us, my lord, which may be upon you to-morrow, and which you cannot avert."

"It is God's wrath upon you, my friend," replied the Earl in a kinder tone, "because you neglect the means He, in His wisdom, has placed in your hands to avert. It is His punishment for disobedience to His natural law. This place is wretchedly damp and low. Look at that open drain—a wholesale breeder of pestilence. You are huddled up here together in a way not fit for human beings to live—hardly for pigs."

Here was insult! Oh, how they ground their teeth and glared at him as he spoke!

"Therefore you must all leave next quarter-day."

Another murmur, louder and more angry than the first.

"In the meantime, go and take your choice of the new cottages on the hill—they will be ready for you to occupy when you quit these."

Here was a surprise! The poor people looked each other in the face in wonderment, scarcely believing their ears. The men stood gaping with their eyes and mouths open to the utmost stretch, and the women, always quickest to perceive what is meant, seized up their children and hugged them to their hearts.

Lord Wanderville's voice quivered a little as he resumed. "They are yours at the same rent as these, and I think you will find them better and more comfortable in every respect. I have made this explanation, which I hope you understand, because you have mis-judged me once or twice already. You now know my determination, and my reasons for it. I shall carry out the first and act up to the second, without fear and without favour."

There was a painful pause.

"By Heaven, he is a good 'un after all!" shouted the spokesman. "Three cheers for his lordship!"

And they were given heartily, till the air rang as the Earl retired from the scene.

In a very few minutes the news was known all over the village, and, viewed by the light he had thrown upon his conduct that day, many an act which we had thought tyrannical and unjust appeared beneficial and kind. So we all turned out, and cheered him again as he passed.

Once or twice he paused, as though he would like to speak to us—for he was naturally a shy man and disliked putting himself forward—and at last he did so.

"Now that we seem to be understanding each other better," he began, "there is one thing I should like to say a word upon. About that soup."

We could not help smiling, and a little urchin bawled out what he, with many others, had been taught to shout in derision, "Twopence a quart!"

"Yes, twopence a quart, my lad, and I hope you will never make a worse bargain," replied the peer, good-humouredly.

"Don't open old sores, my lord," said some one.

"Yes, I will, when old sores are not properly healed—a skilful surgeon opens them freely, in order that they may be so. Now, as I said before, about that soup. Does any one here imagine for a moment that I want to make money out of you? No! I want to make men and women out of those I found beggars—I speak plain English, you see. The sick, and those who cannot pay, shall have the soup free and welcome. I will do all, and more than was done before, for them; but I will not lift my little finger to keep one who is too idle to try and help himself. I ask for your pence as evidence that you are striving to earn an independent living, and I will render them back to you to the last farthing. A man who distributes charity indiscriminately insults those to whom he offers it, and makes them wretched dependents. You have now lived nearly a year without the help you once had—kindly and generously, but not judiciously—afforded you. You have learnt to depend upon yourselves; and now tell me, is there a man or woman here that does not feel happier, and more hopeful, and more independent in consequence?"

"It's true!" "It's true!" "It's true!" passed from mouth to mouth. "Three cheers for his lordship—three cheers for Lady Mabel!"

And as good luck would have it, Lady Mabel drove by that very moment in her little pony-carriage, and when she heard the shouts, and knew their cause, she clapped her dainty little hands together with glee, and exclaimed—

"Then they *will* let me try and make them like me at last! Oh, I'm so glad—so very, very glad!"

God bless her!

I have little more to tell. From that day forth our

village put its shoulder to the wheel and rolled itself into a position in the country that it had never before occupied. We had no more fever, no more idleness. We were gainers by the game preserving, as we were by everything else that we had at first considered a grievance—for half a dozen families were supported by it, and we had more rabbits and hares for dinner than ever. Families who had been living upon alms—as *beggars* really and truly, as Lord Wanderville said—now became ashamed of such a life, and worked and became independent and happy, educated their children, and had more comforts of their own earning in one week than they had ever hoped to possess in their whole lives. We established a school and reading-room, with his lordship's aid, but he never came there with his grand friends patronising us, and telling us how grateful we should be for his goodness, how ignorant and debased we were, and what prodigies of goodness and learning we ought to become, and all that sort of thing, which lords and great folk are too fond of doing. No! he lent us the money to build, and made us pay it back by degrees, all but what he gave, and no one but the committee know how much that was, and all the while he said, "These buildings and these books are *your* property—manage them for yourselves as suits yourselves, and when you want advice come to me, and I will give you the best I can."

And Lady Mabel. Well, I must not let my pen run away with me back into the past, lest it should betray some of my old folly. Heigh-ho! she was a winsome lady! Our folk soon began to understand her little outlandish ways; what their prejudiced vision took for a sneer, turned out to be only a merry pout after all. And

so on with all her ways; what appeared at first to be vanity and affectation, turned out to be pure natural gaiety and grace; and as for her dress! Lord bless you! it did not matter what she wore, velvet or cotton, it was all the same to her—dress her in a sixpenny print and she looked like a queen. Ah! it is so, that the good blood comes out—you cannot hide it.

We did not forget our dear old Mr. Waylett in our prosperity. Oh, no! He lacked the judgment only, not the will, to make us permanently happy. I do not say that we have not our little grievances and our worries like most people; but this I will say, that there is not a more improving place in all broad England than Tarnbridge, or a place that shelters less bad characters and idlers. Lord Wanderville's new system made short work of them; it either converted them into useful members of society, or sent them about their business, and no great loss either. No! we did not forget Mr. Waylett,—how could we? When Ambrose got his living (wonderfully improved he was by his taste of misfortune!) and came to live at Rippleton Parsonage just across the river, there was, of course, no occasion for Miss Grace to remain as a governess (if it had not been for her aid, her brother would not have been able to hold on at college till he was ordained), and she came to keep house for him. Will you believe it? within a year she was the Countess of Wanderville! Getting her back again was our only solace for losing our pretty, winsome, darling Lady Mabel. She married, too, and when her wedding-peal rang out it sounded to me like a knell, and I— Pshaw! what can it matter now? She's happy, and if she was not, it's no business of mine. But, by Jove! I think I should wring the neck of any

man that said one word against her, or caused her a sigh.

So, you see, there are two ways of managing a property and those who live upon it, and it is not he that gives most assistance that renders most help. No, as Longfellow says :—

“ Not enjoyment and not sorrow,
Is our destined end and way;
But *to work*, that each to-morrow
Finds us further than to-day.”

ON CIRCUIT.

THERE are many old customs that have been handed down to us from bygone generations, upon which time has acted like a filter, sweetening and purifying them as they have passed upon their downward course. Some there are, also, which appear to have been influenced in a totally different manner, for instead of leaving their impurities behind them, clinging to the medium through which they have been flowing, they seem to have attracted every foul atom within their reach, and to have left the little good which was once to be discovered in their composition in exchange.

In this country we have a wonderful affection for this latter class. Only let a custom or a formality be sufficiently old, and we cling to it with a tenacity perfectly irresistible. No matter how unsuited it may be to the times in which we live, no matter how much changed, clipped, and distorted it may have been from its original form and purpose; let it but bear the name it was known by a hundred years ago, and that is quite enough; we take all the rest for granted. It is but a relic of the past, a musty, stupid relic perhaps, but still such a relic as must be enshrined and sacrificed to.

We have some ancient offices to which many of these old customs and formalities attach ; some of them harmless enough in their way, so much so as to disarm opposition by their very inanity ; some of them passively mischievous only ; some actively so ; some a mixture of all these qualities, but retaining, notwithstanding, some wreck, great or small, of their pristine use and import. If this could be rescued from out the inert mass of rubbish in which it is involved ; stripped of the fantastic and threadbare trappings of the past, and invested with externals more suited to the temper and requirements of the present, it would be all the better. Of such offices, that of "HIGH SHERIFF" is not the least worthy of consideration.

It would be an endless task to trace the decline and fall of the dignity and power of the High Sheriff, from the potent man-at-arms whom we find in the *Percy Reliques*, the terror of "the bolde outlawe," down to the hospitable gentleman who held the wand of office at the last Assize, and who never was a terror to anybody.

As attendance upon the Judges of Assize is the only duty of his office which exhibits any degree of vitality in our own time, we will take our readers to an Assize and show them the forms and ceremonies thereof—no matter where it is, or when it was ; we will call it the Assize in and for the County of *Greenshire*, held at *Steepleton*.

The county papers have already given notice that "Saturday next is the commission day, when Mr. Baron Bigwig is expected to enter the town, and open the Assize with the usual formalities."

Greenshire, as everybody knows, has a circuit named after itself, of which Steepleton is one of the principal Assize towns. Upon reference to a geographical treatise

identified with our earliest scholastic recollections, and blistered with our bitterest tears, we find upon turning to the letter S—"Steepleton, the County town of Greenshire, famous for its castle, cattle-market, and periwinkles; has a population of 7,000 souls, and returns two members to parliament."

We can answer for its castle being one of the finest old ruins in England; and for its market being certainly the dirtiest hole we ever entered. Of the merits of the Steepleton periwinkles we are not qualified to speak, as we entertain a rooted antipathy to that article of refreshment. Steepleton is not a very flourishing town; it had its 7,000 souls, and its brace of representatives long before the first publication of the learned authority we have quoted, but has not materially improved its position since. The population has decreased rather than otherwise, and there is some talk about taking away one of its members, and giving him over bodily to Forgeham, the great manufacturing town, which, within the last thirty years, has risen from a country village into the commercial capital, not only of Greenshire, but of its five neighbouring counties.

It is needless to say that Steepleton was once an important coaching station, upon the great North road: all old towns which have fallen into decay have once upon a time been great coaching stations. The main road through the town forms the High Street, a long, straight thoroughfare, full of red brick houses and shops to match, cut and shuffled, and apparently upon indifferent terms with one another. It has a railway station at the beginning, a musty and dear hotel in the middle, and a workhouse at the end. The every-day appearance of the town is, or being hopelessly scared by the first, and of going through

the second into the third. The market-place is in the middle of a sort of square, in which some of the best shops are to be found. On market days the sheep and pigs are penned with hurdles upon the pavement, and take the place of the foot passengers, who are consequently driven into the street, which is generally ankle-deep in slush, upon these occasions of a most malodorous nature.

There is a "Theatre Royal" somewhere in Steepleton, but no one seems to know precisely where; it is very seldom taken, and when it is, nobody goes; it is therefore not very much in favour with country managers. There is a chronic rumour that a London company is coming down in a week or two, to restore the fallen fortunes of the establishment—but it never comes. Taking it altogether, Steepleton is not a very lively town; it has a dreamy, dozy air. We have thought that if half the houses were to tumble down into the street, and half the people were to be buried in the ruins, the other half would go on about their business as if nothing unnatural had happened. There is no such thing as a cab, and the chemist sells cigars—an unmistakeable sign, if one were wanted, of the feeble state in which we find the old town.

Nevertheless, the law, which has no respect for persons, or towns either, holds to Steepleton, and ignores the very existence of its great rival, Forgeham, with its tens of thousands of inhabitants, its wealth, its enterprise, its trade. The Steepleton folks have to go to Forgeham for all the necessaries of life, but if the Forgeham people choose to indulge in the luxury of law, they have to return the visit. And not only Forgeham, but all Greenshire has to come to Steepleton, to be plaintiffs, and defendants, and witnesses; to be tried themselves, or become that

eminent conservator of liberty—the British juryman—upon the trials of their neighbours.

There was a time when the high sheriff of Greenshire was pride, pomp, and circumstance personified. He was to the county, in reality, what our lively friends and allies imagine the Lord Mayor to be to the city of London. There were only two or three people in those days who *could* be high sheriff of Greenshire, for bitter beer had not then been invented, and the Burton brewers had yet to buy up all the best estates in the county. Cotton spinning was then in its infancy, and the furnaces of the iron masters, like the fire of Tubal Cain in his sorrow, “smouldered low.” There were no railroads to bring people poking and peering and measuring into country gentlemen’s estates. There was no Mr. Mechi to put new-fangled ideas into the farmers’ heads. The gaols and the workhouses were full, and the labourers’ cottages were empty. It was a good old-fashioned time, and a good old-fashioned county. The half dozen nobility and gentry who possessed the landed qualification necessary for becoming high sheriff of Greenshire, were all wealthy, or appeared to be so. They originated and planned all the county festivities; they presided at the county agricultural meetings; they gave away the county prizes of blue coats with brass buttons, to county labourers who had brought up their families upon seven shillings a week without “coming upon the County.” They kept open house during the assizes, and entertained all comers. They maintained a regiment of retainers in gorgeous array, to accompany them and their guests, the judges, to the confines of their territory, and to protect them against the sympathising friends and admirers of convicted high-

waymen. They were accompanied by their tenantry upon horseback, and their peasantry upon foot; for the assize week was the time chosen for transacting all the business of the half-year at the county town. Purchases were made, orders were taken, bills were paid, meetings for business or pleasure were held, the tradesmen kept open house for their customers, the gentry filled their houses with guests for the balls and concerts, and from the highest to the lowest, it was a busy, bustling period; during which everything was done, from matching muslins to hanging murderers. But to return to the sheriffs, whose reign at these times was at its highest point of grandeur. They drove in coaches with eight horses and outriders; they held levees, and their ladies had drawing-rooms in high pomp and state; they gave grand balls, and invited everybody; they kept bands of music, and paid the piper generally to the tune of from two to four thousand pounds for the expenses of their office alone, during the year of their shrievalty. Every succeeding functionary strove his utmost to outshine his predecessor, till affairs arrived at such a pitch of ostentation and extravagance that they began at last, as was natural, to take a turn in the contrary direction. Instead of puzzling their brains to invent new occasions for display, the sheriffs began to inquire how little was expected from them, until at last we find the high sheriff of Glamorganshire sending a cab to meet the judge, and an association formed in Essex for the abolition of our old friends the javelin men, and the pomp and circumstance of the office altogether. Railways began to cut up old roads and old prejudices, and carried the judges and the bar from place to place. People did not wait for the assizes to go to the town.

give their orders and pay their bills, as heretofore, but ran backwards and forwards at all times as they pleased ; highwaymen gradually became extinct ; farmers found something better to do than riding after the high sheriff's coach. The high sheriffs removed to London for three parts of the year, and spent their superfluous cash there. They dabbled in shares, and their estates began to melt ; Greenshire began to receive new Paladins who did not choose to spend their money in tomfoolery, much less to get into debt for it ; county elections began to be contested ; wives of ruined farmers began to drive their carriages ; mill-owners sent their sons to Oxford and Cambridge ; the workhouses and the prisons began to empty, and business began to look dull upon the Greenshire circuit.

Everything was improved. Old systems, old implements, old habits, were flung aside once and for ever. Even the law, from its stronghold in Westminster Hall, came down in new forms ; men were neither hung for sheep-stealing, nor transported for poaching ; and yet Greenshire, contrary to prophecy, prospered. Amidst so much change, however, two or three of the old customs we have alluded to are still retained, and maintain a sort of second-hand vitality. They have ceased to answer the purpose for which they were intended ; they are worn seedy and threadbare ; they are out of place, and out of character ; they are mere rags and tatters of their originals. We are going to examine one of them now, for Mr. Baron Bigwig is going to open the commission "with the usual formalities."

The sheriff's carriage stands in the High Street, opposite the hotel ; the London coachman is on the box, and the London footmen—in their elegant livery of green plush

unmentionables, scarlet waistcoats, and white coats with yellow shoulder knots, in the pinkest of all possible pink stockings—blossom-like variegated passion-flowers against the pillars of the portico. They have been brought down from town specially for this occasion, and give themselves airs accordingly. Upon the pavement, and around the carriage, stand a score of yokels in green livery coats with red collars. They seem as if they had got up in a hurry, and every man had put on somebody else's coat. These are the sheriff's javelin men, so called because they all carry a long blue pole with an iron spike on the top, and a piece of worsted fringe nailed round to hide the consequent crack. They are not clever in the manipulation of their javelins; the butt-end appears to have a strong affinity for the inside of their legs at all times; and when they are marching, and have shouldered their troublesome charge, the sharp point gyrates playfully under the nose of the man in the rear, who, starting back to avoid it, pokes his javelin through the hat of the man behind him, and the weapon of that worthy, you may be sure, is not idle as he stoops to regain his mutilated covering. Thus a pleasant sensation is communicated down the line, which greatly adds to the dignity of the pageant. Further on, upon the opposite side of the way, are stationed two individuals in similar raiment, each grasping remorselessly in his right hand a brass instrument of acoustic torture, with which he has strict injunctions to deafen the neighbourhood whenever a judge, or high sheriff, gets in or out of the carriage upon any pretence whatever. The secret and rapid manner in which these high dignitaries dodge in and out of their conveyance may thus be accounted for:—they dread the fierce tempest of discord to

which their appearance gives the cue, and seek to avoid it. But no ! the buglers are not to be done out of their blow, and inflict it inexorably. A few beggars and tramps who have nothing else to do, lounge about with their hands in their pockets, watched by a detective or two, on duty from Forgeham. The usual dog is in attendance to create confusion when the procession is being formed. But neither carriage, nor coachman, nor footman, nor javelins, nor trumpeters, nor dog, arouse Steepleton from its doze. If it share the fate of the sleeping city in the fairy tale, and if there be a fair princess fast asleep somewhere, whose waking will restore it to life and animation, the Prince whose kiss is to arouse her, and it is *not* Mr. Baron Bigwig. But now the important moment has arrived. The high sheriff has had his luncheon, and, escorted by his deputy, appears in the hall of the hotel. Their custom is peculiar. They are attired in dress coats, black trousers, pumps, cocked hats, and swords. Ancient usage decrees that they shall appear in full court dress ; modern prejudices do not sanction their "going the whole guy," and so they hit upon an ingenious compromise, and are ridiculous without being correct, thus preserving a rag and tatter of the old custom upon their own proper person and account.

"Attention" is the word of command ; the javelin men form in line, the footmen open the door, and the high sheriff plunges into his carriage as if it were a bath. But he is no match for the trumpeters ; they have seen him flash past, and he must take the consequences ; away go the bugles, away goes the carriage, away go the javelin men, in manner and form as we have attempted to describe ; and away goes the dog to assist the confusion—

all bent towards the judge's lodgings. The judge is wigged and waiting. Encumbered with his heavy scarlet robes, it is not likely that he will be, able to elude the vigilance of the wary buglers ; their eagle glance catches sight of the point curl of his wig, as he steps forward upon the pavement, and he is instantly deafened for the next twenty minutes.

They then proceed round the corner to the courthouse, into which they are driven by another blast of trumpets. Here the commission of oyer and terminer and general gaol delivery for the county of Greenshire is read, and Her Majesty's gracious will and pleasure made known to the public at large, represented on this occasion by the old woman who cleans out the court, and two small boys who have slunk in after the officials, and skirmish about the back benches munching apples. Having performed this "important ceremony," the principal performers are blown once more into their carriage, and then blown into church, where they are preached at by the sheriff's chaplain in a very long sermon, and blown into their conveyance once more at its conclusion. More trumpetings announce the judge's arrival at his lodgings, and the high sheriff's return to his hotel, and then Steepleton has done with trumpeting for the day, and the commission is opened "with the usual formalities."

Now we may be told that this is all right and proper, and that such ceremonies have a great influence upon the lower classes, and tend to invest the law with proper dignity. No such thing ! The great unwashed do not respect the livery servants ; the javelin men are simply absurdities ; the trumpeters do not overawe the small street boys ;—we have known them to have been bribed

with a bite of an apple by these disrespectful urchins to let them have a blow on their own account. Odious comparisons have been drawn between the wig of the coachman and that of the judge, in favour of the former; and truly, his lordship's appearance, viewed from the rear, as wrapped up in his robes, he is assisted into his equipage, is anything but dignified. If the importance of Mr. Baron Bigwig's vocation is to be judged by the procession in which he goes to fulfil it, then it sinks into utter insignificance when compared with that of Mr. Sawdust, who, with his unrivalled circus, enters Steepleton once a year, driving eighteen cream-coloured horses, preceded by a band of music, and followed by his brilliant *troupe* in skeleton gigs and firework wheels.

There is every necessity for "touting" for the mountebank; there is none for puffing the judge,—he is a distinguished officer of the crown about to discharge very high and important functions, and we see no reason why he should not be allowed to set about them like any other gentleman having important duties to transact. We do not think that one prisoner more than the average would be found in the gaol, should he be permitted to do so, and not one less, were he to borrow Mr. Sawdust's eighteen-in-hand drag and the Lord Mayor's show, with the wardrobe of the Princess' Theatre and Mr. Costa's orchestra for the occasion. The "usual formalities," then, are not useful; they are certainly not ornamental. As a pageant these score of old fellows in livery great coats, grasping uncouth weapons, which are utterly useless for any purpose whatever except to give trouble and create confusion, are by no means impressive. If it be decided that the dignity of the law is in such a state of

decline that it requires external support to bolster it up, *then* by all means let us have a procession, and let the judge, and the jury, and the bar, go in state together to the courts, blow their own trumpets loudly, and strike terror and respect into the minds of Her Majesty's lieges. The old remnant which we preserve can have no such effect. It is merely stupid and useless imposing an irksome tax upon those gentlemen who must in turn undertake the duties that remain attached to the post of high sheriff, without conferring any benefit upon any one in return. It is not confined to Steepleton or the Greenshire circuit ; it is maintained with greater or less absurdity throughout England.

We have alluded to two cases in which these forms were dispensed with. Do not let it be supposed that we approve the conduct of the high sheriffs in these instances. The one put a public affront upon a distinguished gentleman who was in law and courtesy his guest ; the association which prompted the other, in sweeping away useless ceremony, went to work so violently. that they lost sight entirely of the boundary where form ended, and use began. The sheriffs were both fined £100 by the offended judge. We can only say with the late Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, that we hope that the association which managed matters so badly in Suffolk subscribed and paid the penalty for their sheriff. We are convinced that the judges do not desire the maintenance of trumpery show *outside* the court, but it is quite indispensable that a force should be in attendance for the preservation of order within its precincts, and the javelin men are fit neither by practice nor training for the service. They do not desire a procession to accom-

pany, and a state coach to carry them to and from their lodgings, but it surely is not an unreasonable demand upon their part that they shall be provided with an equipage suited to their rank and station, when they are called away from their homes, and their own domestic arrangements are no longer available. It is the sheriff's duty to make this provision ; it may be an inconvenience to do so, but that is no part of the question. We are all put to inconvenience, more or less, for the general benefit. Let him but do his duty in a plain, substantial, gentlemanly manner, and no judge, we are convinced, will find fault with him.

O U R T O W N .

CHAPTER I.

I HAVE been asked what there is to be found strange or wonderful in our Town, that I should take upon myself to write, and expect other people to care to read, about it? It has been demanded of me what there is in it to distinguish it, for good and evil, from scores, nay hundreds, of similar collections of houses and shops, men and women, virtues and vices, pride and poverty, which are to be found scattered broadcast over England, and known by other names than that which distinguishes our local habitation? I have been warned that fourth-rate satire is "most tolerable and not to be endured." That the authors of *HARD TIMES* and *ESMOND* enjoy a monopoly of the first-class article which is not to be infringed, and that all other writers must emulate the example of that cautious old lady who declared that her sons should never go into the water until they had learned to swim.

I am also informed, that if I suppose that a set of vulgar caricatures will go down—if I think that by indulging in a series of flippant personalities upon A. or B., or C. or D., I shall further the respectability or in-

terest of this publication—I have never been more mistaken in my life; neither “our Town” nor the public will endure them. On the contrary, a fast friend, who has acquired a habit of dashing in upon me at unseasonable hours, was pleased to fly into a paroxysm of delight when he saw the heading of this article upon my table. “By Jove! old fellow,” he said, “what a splendid idea; it’s capital. Mind you pitch into old E. and Mother F—. I’ll get Fan (Fan is his sister) to draw a picture of G.’s hat with his nose under it, by Jingo! (my young friend can never make a remark without the assistance of either Jove or Jingo,) and you can have it printed.”

Hardly had I got rid of my indiscreet visitor when I was waited upon by our stationer, who is a great antiquarian. He kindly offered me any assistance in his power, as, of course, I intended to enter fully into the ancient history and antiquities of “our Town,” and proposed that I should incorporate into my sketch his unpublished treatise upon the Position and Constitutional Functions of the Parish Pump, and his argument before our Archæological Society, upon the celebrated controversy as to whether William III. did or did not drink out of the iron ladle which was suspended from the institution in question, until it was stolen by a travelling tinker in the year 1780.

I have had, already, many more critics, to each and all of whom I returned an indirect but, I hope, courteous reply. That I shall satisfy any one of them, I do not expect. I know that I shall be a great deal too smart for some, and a great deal too dull for others; that I shall pass by subjects that are really interesting to prose away upon others, that no one cares to hear about; that I shall

treat serious matters with unbecoming levity, and that I shall be "confoundedly dull" notwithstanding.

To begin, then, I confess that "our Town" is very much like any other town ; but I maintain that there is no spot in which the human family, to the number of 5,000, are gathered together which does not present some features of curiosity, or contain some persons worthy of consideration.

I may be told that I am only bringing out again a few old hackneyed types. I answer, "There is nothing new under the sun!" Did the great novelists of past ages *create* characters? No such thing! Their names, however absurd and comical they may sound, may all be found in the "London Post Office Directory," or are to be discovered doing other duty in "Bradshaw's Railway Guide;" their originals were once living, and breathing, and walking about *somewhere*, however unnatural we may sometimes consider the picture. Have the Othellos, and the Cæsars, and the Juliets, and the Timons, died with Shakespeare, think you? the Tom Jones's, and the Amelias, with Fielding? the Randoms with Smollett? or the Dr. Primroses with Goldsmith; any more than the Toots, and the Murdstones, and the Bumbles, will go out with Dickens? or the Becky Sharps and Colonel Newcomes, become extinct with Thackeray?

These great masters of their art have examined the heaving mass of humanity before them, much as we investigate the wonderous and beautiful creations which the microscope discovers to us in a drop of stagnant water. They have seized curious specimens out of their field of observation. They have made themselves acquainted with their formation, learned their use, watched their nature

and habits. They have counted their antennæ, like a naturalist with a beetle; unfolded their petals, like a botanist with a flower; discovered specks upon their brightness, like an astronomer with a star, and then displaying them before us, have explained their peculiarities, like great moral lecturers as they are.

So, in "Our Town," I, with my limited mental vision, can find nothing new or strange; but as homely things, pleasantly told, strike sometimes, like old tunes, pleasantly upon the ear, I will venture to take my readers to "Our Town," and introduce them, with their permission, to some of its celebrities.

You may come within half of a mile of us without knowing where you are. We lie in wait for weary travellers, in a sudden bend of the road, at the foot of the hill. We spring upon him, as it were, and offer rest or shelter, meat and drink, before he has quite made up his mind that he has reached his destination. When I can first recollect "Our Town," there was no railway within twenty miles of it. You had to come by the road, and a wide, smooth, pleasant one it was.

You have seen it stretched before you for miles and miles, climbing up the hills one above the other, and winding amidst the valleys in long succession. The river follows you upon your way, dashing across your path here and there—flowing away in an opposite direction—returning, twisting, shining, splashing across the road again, and then, darting off at an angle, leaves you for awhile, and is seen lacing the dark pines, like a silver thread in the distance. As you journey along, the bright stream becomes quite a companion to you. You have listened to its bubble from the foot-planks, where it crosses the high-

way in so shallow a flood that it scarcely wets the horses' knees as they wade through it. You have gazed into its dark pools from the bridges which you have crossed, and have watched the dace leaping in the sunshine. You have been told of a short cut along its banks, perhaps, and have frightened the moor hen from her nest in the rushes; seen her half run, half fly along the stream, and plump down again upon the other side. You have watched the water rat at his work; and, whilst stooping to pick some aquatic plant, have heard a loud splash at your feet, and a long cloud of rising mud has shown you the place from whence the pike has darted, and the direction in which he has gone. You have pondered, uninterruptedly, over the deeps, and the restless shallows have awakened new thoughts, or old recollections. A pleasant companion is our little river!

Having lost sight of the stream for a mile or two, as you pass through a cutting in the side of the stiffest hill you have yet encountered, you are not sorry to catch a glimpse of the parapet of a stone bridge, in the valley beneath. It hides, for a moment, your old friend, who has darted round by a way of his own, and is springing merrily over the stones to greet you. You may go quickly down the descent, for it is a steep one; you may skim by the plantation—flit over the bridge—skip round the corner—and then, presto! you are in “our town.”

Yes, there is the blacksmith's shop, and there is the blacksmith—an uncommunicative old Cyclops that he is—smoking his pipe, over the half door of his smithy. There is the inn, with its sandy passage, and the old hound basking in the sunshine, outside the porch. There is the shop of my friend the antiquary, with last year's valen-

tines, and the note-paper, with a picture of the church, exhibited in the window. There is the church itself—not quite so grand an edifice, it must be confessed, as its picture represents it to be—upon the hill-side to the left. There is the little green, with the engine-house, shining, white and round, like an overgrown daisy, in the centre. There is the row of white cottages, with low, diamond-paned windows, exhibiting the pickle bottles, full of sweet stuff, which I can remember as long as I can remember anything. There is the tumble-down old cage, in which we could not secure a criminal if we had one. There is the barber, who sells fishing-tackle and fireworks—in his white apron at his shop door, lying in ambush for some one to gossip with. There is the water-mill, with its ceaseless clack, clack, and there—*there* is Nelly Dale, the Curate's niece, in her simple white dress and gipsy hat, with a bunch of wild flowers in her hand, and some good gentle thoughts in her heart, or it would not be Nelly Dale.

Our Town belongs to Nelly Dale. Nelly is an orphan; her father was a lieutenant in the army, who married for love and beauty, and died an old man, careworn and penniless at forty. The living of Nelly's uncle is worth about £180 a-year. Of silver and gold Nelly Dale has none, save that which rings in the sound of her sweet voice, or glistens in her long bright curls. But for all this, what I have said before, I say again, Our Town belongs to Nelly Dale in fee, in her right as Queen Regnante of our affections. You would puzzle me if you asked me to trace her title to us. She did not take us by storm or a *coup d'état*, you may be sure, for a forest fawn is not more unpresuming or timid than our Nelly. Were you to

take a dozen of us, and ask each why he or she loved and respected her, you would get a dozen distinct answers in reply. Perhaps, dropping particulars, one would generalise and say, "Because she is a right good lass, and has a kind word and smile for every body."

For my own part, I think it is the exquisite grace with which she moves, and speaks, and acts; the utter unconsciousness of her own beauty and worth; her devoted admiration of the good, common-place, honest clergyman who is her protector, and inferior in every respect, that constitutes the charm which has bound her so closely to all our hearts. Then she has grown up amongst us from a child to a woman, we scarcely know how; but we find ourselves leaning for advice or sympathy to-day, upon the same Nelly whom we dandled upon our knee, and twined daisy chains for, yesterday. She has a knack of doing good, as if it were she who ought to be grateful to us for tolerating her services. But she is prompt and decisive in action, is our Nelly, upon occasion—brave and resolute is Nelly Dale! Who dared to interfere between the drunken poacher and his poor bruised and bleeding wife but Nelly Dale? What ever brought tears into the blood-shot eyes of that bloated savage, and remorse into his hardened heart till the power of Nelly's sweet pale face and earnest voice was felt and heard within his wretched hovel.

Our territorial landlord is a very different person from Nelly, I can tell you. See now, that is *the* House—the Grange—that you are now passing. It had a moat round it at one time, which has been partly filled up, and made into a ha-ha. Observe the live stock in the park—you may count them by hundreds. Look at those fine cows, suggesting inexhaustible supplies of rich milk. What do

you think of the black oxen on the other side of the stream? May not a man feel proud of such a breed? Hark to the twinkling of the sheep-bells upon the uplands; you will not find one limping foot upon this pasture. What is that sound? Why the ring of the woodman's axe, to be sure! See what noble trees they are thinning away! It seems almost a pity to fell such fine timber, does it not? and right in face of the house too? Perhaps you may think it is to open a wider view of the estate! Well, you must cut down a good many more trees before you can see to its utmost limit in this direction. It extends far beyond those waving corn-fields, up to where you see those three firs standing alone upon the hill-top. All the rich meadow land on either bank of the stream, up to the second mill, belongs to it. Go to the miller, and ask him how many sacks of wheat he grinds a week, and you will be astonished! That high wall to your left is the kitchen-garden—it is five acres; you may catch the gleam of the hot-houses and pineries a little further on.

A fortunate man, you think, is Sir Vaughan Balcaraign, Bart., to possess so princely an estate. Why, such a property in Germany, would be a Dukedom, and Sir Vaughan a Prince of Saxe Something or other, and have a Court, and an army; aye! and be able to pay for them, which is more. Let me point you a moral by taking you a little closer to the house. You have been admiring nature; now let us look at the background which man has daubed into the picture. In the midst of what was once a flower-garden, but now is a wilderness, over-grown with weeds and encumbered with rubbish, stands a deserted mansion. Cold and soundless, steeped knee-deep, as it were, in a

pool of ruin and desolation which has soaked into and corroded it. There is no breath of life in the tall chimneys ; no light in the broken and shattered windows ; no welcome in the moss-grown porch. The house is dead, and so are the hopes and the pleasures that it once held. The estate has been mortgaged even beyond its value ; the mortgagee is in possession, and makes the best he can out of it. The Grange is of no use to him, or, indeed, to any one else. It is too large ; too out of the way ; too much in want of repair. The land has passed through the hands of six generations of Balcaraigns as though they were so many sieves—each one finer than the one before it. It was but little that has been shaken down into that which its present nominal possessor held. He had not been seen in England for many a year, and was, when last heard of, a billiard-marker in Vienna.

The three last Balcaraigns—son, father, and grandfather, have each had an infallible scheme for recruiting the fallen fortunes of their house, and redeeming the encumbrances upon its land. The first was the South Sea Company—the last, hazard!—canals and railroads formed the middle term between the systems of gambling which the world acknowledges, and applauds when successful, and those upon which it cries out “fie.” I am bound to say that the transactions of his forefathers, though noted down in large books and carefully-prepared schedules tied up with the most business-like red tape, deposited in irreproachable boxes and safes, and pigeon-holed with imposing regularity, were not one whit less reckless or extravagant in their nature than those more simple conveyances which young Sir Vaughan adopted, dice-box in hand, at the “Board of green cloth,” by which official name hew a

wont to designate the gambling-table. However, *he* is spoken of as a profligate spendthrift, and *they*, as respectable, but unfortunate gentlemen. Peace be to their ashes !

Of Sir Vaughan, I know no more than that he is a gambler by nature, and a beggar by circumstances. Per contra, I have heard many good actions attributed to him. Look at the old house now, as the sunshine falls upon it. The sun does not refuse to shine there because the walls are broken down and desolate. Let us not refuse in our turn to throw a good word upon the poor young fellow—you see I have a morbid sympathy for vice—an outcast in his youth, cold and hungry, perhaps, in a foreign land, standing alone friendless and deserted, like the ruined home of his fathers, with moral cobwebs polluting the darkened chambers of his heart.

It is worth coming down to our Town upon the twenty-fourth of June specially to see the mortgagee in possession. I invariably associate him with clean shirts, he is so very white, so delicately smooth, so cool; his features are so carefully plaited down into shape, and he fits himself so accurately, that I conclude some unseen process of starching and ironing is always going on about him. He is not over and above communicative. He has one or two common-place expressions, which he keeps in stock for all occasions, and pronounces slowly and distinctly, letting them out of his mouth as if it were a trap. When he has delivered an opinion or remark, he has a habit of adding, "Yes, yes," with a sort of smack of his lips, as though he had tasted himself and liked the flavour. He is thought to be wonderfully clever, because he has made so very large a fortune

for himself. My friend, the antiquary, tells me he can 'vouch for his possessing a very superior order of mind, as he once expressed a wish to read his work upon the great Parish Pump question; which, as the honest, little man very truly remarked, was tough reading. I never saw him angry but once, and that was when a deputation waited upon him during one of his annual visits, to request that he would read a paper at our Mechanics' Institute (we like to get great men to come and lecture to us). He got very red, and seemed not quite certain in his mind whether he ought not to resent the application as impertinent. He could not think of such a thing. "Bless the people!" he said, several times, very much disturbed when the full force of the request dawned upon him; "bless the people, what have I got to lecture about?" but he yes, yes'd, and tasted himself, as usual, afterwards, and appeared to be as palatable as ever.

I must not forget our Mechanics' Institute by the way. It stands back out of the High Street. It is built upon the model of Noah's Ark, as rendered by Dutch toy-makers, without, of course, the boat-like bottom with which that most unseaworthy craft is provided. It has not the cheerful appearance of that structure, however, its designers having evidently come to the conclusion that education is not a thing to be trifled with, to be made easy or attractive, to suit the whims and fancies of the lower classes. Therefore, the outside has been designed in the severest style, presenting to the principal point of sight, a blank, red brick wall, with **MECHANICS' INSTITUTE, 1854**, depicted thereon in white tiles. The principal room in the interior is, of course, the reading-room. This has been made one of the most painfully, low-spirited apartments I ever had

the misfortune to enter. A little learning is a dangerous thing, without doubt, in our Athenæum ; for, in winter, the winds of heaven hold a soirée round its table, and in summer there is imminent danger of being stifled from want of proper ventilation. The lowest tender for gloom had evidently been accepted in forming and furnishing the place. The very hardest wood, and shapes most inimical to the repose of the human form, had been selected for chairs and seats ; the windows are never cleaned or opened, and the fire-place is constructed upon the principle of giving out the maximum amount of smoke and dust for the minimum degree of heat. No one ever laughs in the reading-room. In the first place, it is forbidden in one of those ghastly placards which you see hung, like malefactors, around the walls, and in the second place, the deep gloom which pervades, checks in the bud all unseemly hilarity. If you want to see a man reading "Pickwick" without a smile, you must go to our Athenæum. I was taken up so sharply by our managing director (who is, as he tells one, "a strictly practical man,") when I suggested that, to induce the working classes to leave their homes in the evenings to frequent the library, a little more cheerfulness and comfort should be provided, that I don't mean to mention the subject again. In the new slang of the day, "I'm sorry I spoke." Mine host of the Cat and Bagpipes acts upon the erroneous principle I advocated, and has a full bar-parlour every night ; but then, you know, he is not a "practical man."

I have one consolation in this dispute, I have Nelly Dale upon my side. Our strictly practical director, Mr. Stumpup, who is also an eminent statist, does not get on well, by-the-by, with that young lady. He will prove to

you, "Sir," by facts, "hard facts, and plain figures," that the mischief that girl does is beyond belief. He can make it quite clear to the dullest capacity "that three-eighths of a boy of fifteen years old is deprived of employment out of every three hundred souls, by what you please to call her *charity*." "If we had two more such idle meddlers in the Town, Sir, poor rates would be up a farthing in the pound. I can prove it, Sir. I am not in the habit of stating what I cannot prove. Two and two make four, I believe, Sir! Your young lady sentimentalists can't get over *that*, I think, hey?" and Mr. Stumpup thrusts his hands deep into his breeches pockets, and rattles the half-crowns there, conclusively. Nell does not understand statistics, but holds to her old course of cheering words and kind looks, and so sacrifices her three-eighths of a boy per annum, remorselessly!

I have overtaken Nelly Dale in the main street, and am walking on with her towards the Parsonage. There is a man, worn and dusty with travelling, sitting by the roadside before us. He has taken off his shoes, and is cooling his swollen feet in the little brook. One of them is cut badly, apparently with some sharp stone, and is bleeding into the clear cold water; but he does not heed it. His dress is old and ragged, but it seems to hang upon him gracefully, notwithstanding. There is an indescribable something about him that interests us; and as he is so absorbed in thought, gazing into the rapid stream, that he does not notice our presence, we stop and regard him for a moment closely. It is a handsome face that the water reflects—careworn and sad, though. He has evidently seen better days; his hand is small and delicately formed, and "See," said Nelly, "the ring with hair in upon his

finger." What sharp eyes women have! I should not have noticed it. Nelly would like to take him to the Parsonage, and give him some lint and plaster for his wounded foot. "Perhaps he has to walk many more miles before he reached his home," she pleads. But I tell her that, in my opinion, it would hardly do for her to accost a person of his appearance, because I thought, and so did she, that underneath his ragged clothes he was a gentleman. If he had been a labourer, it would have been very different. So Nelly agreed with me that it could not be helped; and so we passed on, giving one parting glance to the fine face and manly figure, dejected as it was in spirit, or worn out with bodily weariness and toil; reposing there so silently like the ruin of a man, still gazing into the water, and moving not.

"Look at the old Grange," I said, as we mounted the hill. "How fine it looks in the sunset?"

"It makes me sad," said Nelly Dale, "to look at it. There is, to my mind, an almost human expression of pain and sorrow in its ruined aspect like—like the countenance of the man we saw by the stream below." I laughed at the far-fetched comparison, and went in for my evening's chat with Mr. Dale.

The time passed quickly away. I lit my cigar, and took my leave about half-past ten, after having lost two hits and a gammon to the Curate at his favourite game. My nearest way home lay through the churchyard. I cannot tell why I began to think of the Balcaraigns, and to direct my gaze through the gloom to where the past generations lay in their last slumber. I did so; and there I saw the figure of a man lying upon the dank grass. I quickly sprang over the graves, and turned his face from

the sod, and saw, in an instant, that he was the man that we had encountered upon the road-side. I looked up, and read upon the gravestone, under which he had fallen, "Sacred to the memory of Sarah, the widow of Oliver Balcaraign, Bart., who died 18—." I remembered that she had expired a few weeks before, praying fervently that she might be spared to bless her absent and erring boy. He had returned too late. Sir Vaughan Balcaraign—the gambler and outcast—lay perishing of cold and hunger upon his mother's grave !

CHAPTER II.

WHEN the fever, which had seized upon Vaughan Balcaraign immediately after the occurrence narrated in my last chapter, was at its height, the mortgagee in possession favoured us with his annual visit. An event of no little importance procured us the honour of his gracious presence full a month before the usual time. He was mortgagee in possession now no longer; the court of chancery had given him the absolute proprietorship of the estate; the mortgages were fore-closed; the land put up for sale, and the title of its old possessors knocked down for ever. It was only one blow the more; they had been "going, going," for three generations, and now that they were "gone," there was but little palpable change. Sir Vaughan, as we have seen, had not drawn a penny from his vast estates for some years, he was a gainer by his loss if anything; for after the sale had been completed.

the incumbrances paid off, and the lawyers, auctioneers, and agents had each and all had their pickings, a magnificent surplus of one hundred and seventy-five pounds nine shillings and eight pence halfpenny was handed over to the last descendant of the Balcaraigns in exchange for his patrimony. Now that our smooth friend, the quondam mortgagee in possession, has acquired a local habitation in "Our Town," it is proper that he should also have a name. In the city, where his business had been carried on and his fortune made, he was indifferently known as "old G.," "Griggs and Co.," or, "Choker Griggs," according to the position of the speaker, and the proximity of the object of that conversation ; but when he at last retired from trade, shut up shop, and having purchased Balcaraign Park, started as a country gentleman, as a preliminary to becoming a county member, he added a new head and tail to the somewhat plebeian and decidedly monosyllabic "Griggs," and turned it into the more aristocratic and euphonius cognomen of de Griggue, said to be the original and authentic style of his ancestors, before a levelling utilitarian age clipped it of its fair proportions. Wondrous preparations were made at the old house to receive its new lord and his family. It was then, for the first time known to us, that he possessed a large and decidedly aggressive wife, and a small peakey daughter, who looked as if she had vegetated for many years of some former existence, as a sick canary bird, and was shortly about to resume her original state.

But this by the way. A regular army of carpenters, joiners, cabinet-makers, upholsterers, smiths, paper-hangers, bricklayers, and glaziers, with scrubbers, cleaners, and assistants of all sorts, sizes, and descriptions, laid

siege to, captured, and took possession of the old house, and turned it out of windows, not only figuratively, but literally also, for one-third of it they pulled down outright, and the rest they altered to such an extent that, to any uneducated eye, it seemed that they might just as easily have built a new house at once. It was a rare time for trade I can assure you, but a very indifferent one for the owls, rats, and mice, whose favourite residences were thus ruthlessly invaded. Then came the furnishing—the grandest part of all. The cypher and coat-of-arms of the de Griguetts (discovered for them by the ingenious gentleman who advertises in the *Times*) was woven into the carpets, worked into the curtains, embroidered upon the screens, painted in the hall, and sculptured over the porch. Much time and labour were expended by my little friend the antiquary in trying to find the crest—a giraffe with a castle in its mouth—amongst the armorial bearings of the Barons of King John, and, strange to say, notwithstanding the clear evidence procured by the gentleman in London of the nobility of a de Griguet of that date, and their undoubted connexion with the Griggses of a few years ago, he has not been able yet to satisfy his mind upon the subject.

It was the boast of the decorator who furnished and fitted up the rooms, that there was nothing in the house that could be matched. Everything was designed and made expressly for it, from the carvings of the ceilings to the knobs on the bell-pulls. An artist from Paris painted young ladies of horticultural tastes and strumous habit, standing upon nothing, in the panels of the drawing-room; an architect designed the chandeliers; and a sculptor modelled the fire irons. The picture gallery was a wonder

of completeness. Such lights ! Such seats to repose upon and admire the pictures, which were ordered at —— per yard, of certain limners who were not too proud to be placed under the orders of the upholsterer as to the size, shape, and prevailing colour of their works. The library was a model of comfort. Such easy chairs ! Such leather-topped tables ! Such paper cases, and inkstands of so ingenious a construction that you could not get a drop of ink out of them when you wanted it, and spilt it all over the table when you did not ! Such book-cases, with glass cases and Bramah locks ! Such a carpet ! Such foot-stools ! There was but one thing wanting, and that in a library might, perchance, by some be considered an important item—I mean *books*. There was the current “Bradshaw,” and “Peerage,” and the “Gardener’s Chronicle” up to 1827. But I cannot conscientiously style this a valuable literary collection. I should bore the reader dreadfully if I were to take him all over the house. Suffice it to say that thousands of pounds were spent upon it, and when all was done, the distinguished proprietor, his wife, and daughter, lived pretty comfortably in a corner of one of the wings.

Meanwhile, Vaughan Balcaraign, quivering between life and death, shared my poor house, and no one but the Curate and his niece knew of his presence in “Our Town.” Many a long week did he lie in my little study—which we had fitted up as a bedroom for him—sometimes raving wildly of cards and dice, and great gains and losses at play ; sometimes motionless, giving scarcely a sign that life remained for days and days together. At other times he fancied that he was a boy again at home, and planned schemes of sport and pleasure for the next day. The next

day ! ah, what a fearful word is "to-morrow" spoken in a sick chamber, with death, perhaps, in waiting on the threshhold !

Well, he recovered at last ; and when he was strong enough to hear conversation, I told him what had happened ; of his mother's death ; of my finding him in the grave-yard ; of the sale of his estate ; and of all that had happened since he left England. He tried to appear quite reckless, and scoffed bitterly at fate and fortune ; but a slight quivering of the lip, and a glistening of the eye—which he strove in vain to suppress—told me that these were but lip words, and that his heart, seared and battered as it was, was in the right place after all. But good matter-of-fact Mr. Dale was shocked beyond expression. He came more than once to read and talk to the sick man, but met with such rebuffs upon matters of religion, that he was fairly driven from the subject. He was unwise enough to argue with Vaughan upon his captious and sometimes even blasphemous observations, and so gave them weight, and him encouragement. I am afraid that he even took a delight in shocking the good man when he found the way to do so. Still all this was done in a manner with which it was impossible to take offence. He was so winning, so frank, so grateful for the trifles we were able to do for him, and oh ! so pale and worn, it made my heart sick to hear the laugh and scoff from his lips, and see the great black lines which sorrow and care had torn across his face and brow.

He was miserable, broken down, helpless, and tried, as many another has done before him, to hide all his better feelings lest they should stand up in judgment against him.

One day, when he was just strong enough to walk for half-an-hour upon the sunny side of the parsonage garden, leaning upon my arm, Mr. Dale began as usual to argue with him upon some of his follies—I will call them by no more dignified name—and received in answer his usual sceptical replies. Having completely taken away Mr. Dale's breath by the audacity, and, I must add, the impiety of one of his sayings, he appealed to Nelly, who was standing beside her uncle, as to what she thought of his reasoning. “I am not learned enough,” she said, with a touch of sorrow, as I thought, in her sweet voice, “to decide between you; I believe what I read, and am happy in my belief; if you also are happy in your unbelief pray persevere in it.”

“I am quite strong now, and can walk a good distance,” he said to me one day; “we will not go to the parsonage garden again.”

“As you please,” I resumed; but why not?”

“It is not fit that such as I am should go near Miss Dale; I offend her.”

“Oh, I think not,” I replied.

“Besides,” he continued, without noticing my words, “she said I was to hold my opinions if they brought me happiness. She *knew* how wretched—how utterly degraded I am. Oh! friend, friend,” laying his hands on my shoulders, with the tears in his eyes, and the tremble in his voice, “why did you not leave me where you found me—at rest, in the cold church-yard?”

“Would you dare so to rest?”

“There, there again, you are taunting me with these covert reproaches; you are just alike. What matter is it to either of you whether I am happy, or what I dare—”

"Nothing, of course," I answered carelessly. I half repented what I had said when I saw his head droop, and the loud braggadocio air drop from him like a cloak, and heard the long deep sigh with which he said, "You are right; nothing, of course." But I had reasons for what I said, and time has proved that they were good ones.

One day I found him sketching idly upon a piece of rough paper. "Holloa!" said I, "don't destroy that. So you are an artist, are you?"

"A mongrel animal of that breed," he said, dashing off a fantastic sketch one instant, and effacing it the next.

"Have you any notion of an architectural drawing?"

"I can plan you anything from a palace to a sentry-box."

"Well, then, you shall compete for the new School buildings. There, now, there is the advertisement for plans; there are the requirements. There's plenty of paper; don't spare it. I give you two hours to produce a drawing that shall distance all competitors. You are always boring me about your poverty and your doctor's bill. Set to work and wipe it off."

The plan was finished and accepted. Our eminent statistician had nothing to do with the selection, so the design was light, pleasant, and withal appropriate.

The evening that the decision in his favour arrived, he accompanied me to the Parsonage for the first time for many days, and carried with him a water-coloured drawing of the New Schools, and the lovely hill side on which they were to be built, as a present for Mr. Dale.

"A peace-offering, Sir," he said, "for our disputation. I retire from the contest; surrender without reserve. But," he added in a lower tone, "I fear I have not yet taught you to believe in my sincerity."

It was the pleasantest evening we had spent for a long time. Vaughan was quite boyish in his delight at his success, and received the congratulations of the Curate and his pretty niece with a depth of gratitude that to a stranger might have appeared affected. First drawing—then painting—then art in general—then Italy the mother of art—was discussed. Vaughan knew much of each, and talked well, pleasantly, and soundly, until at length our part in the conversation subsided into asking questions, &c., and making observations upon what he told us, yet there was not a dogmatic or egotistical word upon his lips. Mr. Dale even forgot his game of Backgammon; and when at last we rose to take our leave, it was with regret on both sides.

"Are you not going to wish Nelly 'good night' Mr. Vaughan?" asked the Curate, as we all stood together in the porch. (No one but myself knew his real name, which by his desire I concealed.) "Good night, Miss Dale," said Vaughan; then, with a low bow, he passed her proffered hand and went out.

"You have offended Miss Dale," I said, as we walked along. "Why did you refuse to shake hands with her?"

"Not yet," he answered, "not yet. See, now," and he lifted his arm high up in the moonlight, "this hand has never yet done one good work, or stopped short of one folly or vice; it has much to do and to undo before it is fit to be grasped by such an—such as Miss Dale."

Again, through the lonely church-yard, with the moon-beams lighting up forgotten monuments; again upon his mother's grave knelt the last of the Balcaraigns; and again I stood by but spoke not. For I knew what wholesome tears were falling; could guess what prayers were more

than *said*; so I left him alone with his great sorrow and his deep repentance, and wended my way slowly home-wards. It was close upon midnight when he returned, and then his step was light, and his head erect. He was a changed man.

"Old friend," he said, taking my hand in his, "is it not a farce for a man to give up hope and fame at six and twenty?"

"Why, yes; no doubt of it."

"Then why have you never told me so?" "

"Because you have never been in a fit state of mind to hear it."

"Ah! true, true," said he, "but I am fit for anything now. Come, you have plenty of hard words and home thrusts for me now; plenty of unpleasant truths. I have been a scoundrel—am a beggar; would be a man and a gentleman again. How is it to be done? I am in the humour to hear if you are to speak. Go on; strike and spare not."

I did not spare him; I should have been no true friend had I done so. I said all I had to say, and he heard me to the end patiently.

It was but a small thing to turn the whole current of a man's life—that little School building—but it was a success; and coming at a time when self-confidence and hope were well nigh extinguished, roused an impulsive and vigorous nature into healthy action. No one knew Vaughan, as I have said, in "Our Town." He was a mere child when he had been there last. So we agreed that the best thing to be done was to take advantage of his talent for drawing, and start as an artist as plain *Mr. Vaughan*. We thought that for the present, until he had

got quite strong again, he had better remain in "Our Town." So he built a snug studio in my garden with the proceeds of the prize plans, and set to work manfully. The first picture he painted was an Allegory—the Angel of Mercy waiving back Despair from a Fallen Man. Mr. de Griggue called upon him; saw it, and offered a good price, but Vaughan declined firmly to part with it. The face of the man was hidden, but that of the angel was marvellously like Nelly Dale.

The New Schools progressed rapidly towards completion, and their architect, Mr. Vaughan, (Sir Vaughan Balcaraign no longer), in a corresponding state of elevation at the success of his handiwork, and the picturesque effect of his designs. He had had some trouble, as he told me, with the contractor to get him to carry out some of his fancies (for Vaughan's plans were most unprofessionally original), but had managed to overcome his scruples by sundry draughts upon the credulity of his worthy brick-and-mortar coadjutor, drawn, certainly not at *sight*, upon numerous foreign cities. So nearly was the work completed that my friend, Mr. Watford, Honorary Secretary of the undertaking, called a meeting of the Executive Committee, in order that the works might be duly inspected. There was not, of course, the least necessity for a meeting. The same penny note to each member which called the meeting, would have given us due notice, and we could have met somewhere on the road, and gone all together. But my very excellent friend is a pattern of regularity, and will never take a step in anything unless it be properly "moved and seconded." So he called a meeting, as I have mentioned, at which two members attended. He "moved" one into a Chair at one end of a very long

table, and seated himself at the other, with his books and papers, taking minutes of the proceedings, all of which he moved himself, and, it is needless to say, carried unanimously. So it was ordered, 1st, "That the Members of the Executive Committee of the Winkstead Schools do inspect the works and buildings of the said Schools and report thereon." 2nd. "That Tuesday, the 9th day of September be the day appointed for such inspection." Then "a vote of thanks" being moved, by Mr. Watford of course, to the Chairman for his impartial conduct in the Chair, the meeting terminated, and was duly chronicled in the county papers.

Winkstead was a hamlet connected with "Our Town;" had a little Church and a large Curate of its own. I must introduce the latter to my readers without further delay—"Reader, the Rev. Cymon Goodfellow; Mr. Goodfellow, the Reader." There, now you are on speaking terms; this mysterious right, so sacred in the eyes of true Britons, having been duly performed. The Rev. Cymon stands six feet one in his stockings, his arms and legs being long for his height. He is a great scorner of conventionalities of all sorts; you cannot match his hat or his boots in all England. His inseparable companion is his umbrella, which he grasps not in walking-stick fashion, but shoulders like a club. He is a gentleman and a scholar, in word, thought, and deed. He is a good Christian, crotchety and eccentric even in the discharge of his high and holy duties; but such matters are to his real worth, what his grotesque coat and umbrella are to his exterior; know him for a week, and both will become transparent, and the good heart and mind will shine through. The casket which contained this rough diamond was a small old-

fashioned farm-house, half of which, that is to say, a kitchen with a tiled floor and a little cosy bed-chamber, owned him lord. As the clergyman of the district in which the school-house was to be built, he was, of course, a member of the Executive Committee. Mr. de Griggue, Mr. Balance, the banker, Mr. Dale, Mr. Watford, Mr. Stumpup, and your humble servant, formed that grave and deliberate assembly.

The mansion of Mr. de Griggue was honoured about this time by a noble guest, a young Earl, who, according to his own account of himself, was "going in for schools and all that sort of thing you know." He was a florid youth, with high cheek bones and a very wide mouth, which was constantly on the broad grin. He had a slow deliberate way of saying ordinary things, which made them appear irresistibly queer, and was constantly on the watch for fun. Mr. de Griggue was excessively proud of his guest, whose title he revered, and never lost an opportunity of mouthing, albeit its noble possessor would address him as "old cock," and smoke black clay pipes in his picture gallery. Having introduced his Lordship, the Earl of Ballycrackum, with all pomp to all of us, including Vaughan, when we met to proceed to the School Building, what was his horror, when Mr. Goodfellow, after a preliminary flourish with his umbrella, shouted out—

"I tell you what it is, you fellows, you shall come and dine with me afterwards, and we'll talk over what we have seen quietly; you must take what you can get, you know, but the air of the hills will be good sauce, I can tell you."

The first person to accept unconditionally was the Peer; he scented fun. From tip to toe the eccentric Curate was

a mine of enjoyment to him ; and he prowled around him wonderingly, as strange dogs examine suspicious interlopers. He put an end to his pompous entertainers apologies and expostulations by telling him to "shut up like a good old buck." Mr. Ballance could not decline accompanying him for sundry good financial reasons. Poor Mr. Ballance, he was of a penitential and dyspeptic appearance, and sighed when he thought of the dinner in store for him at the little farm-house, under the auspices of the huge Curate.

Well, the Schools were duly inspected. Everybody praised the design, but had some improvement of their own to suggest by way of perfecting it. Of course, such proposed amendments were diametrically opposite. One would have built the front a yard higher if he had had anything to do with it ; another remarked, that the only fault was that the building was too high for its width. Mr. de Griggue would, certainly—yes—yes—have put in another window—yes ; but Mr. Stumpup, my statistical friend, proved most distinctly by indisputable data, that it had already two squares and seven-eighths more glass than fifteen-twentieths of other schools of the same linular dimensions. Poor Mr. Ballance was thinking of his dinner, and said nothing ; but Lord Ballycrackum vowed they were "stunning," and would not a kennel built in the same style look "out and out." Mr. Watford saw nothing to object to but the arrangement of having only one tap for drinking water for the two Schools, not because it was not sufficient for supply and accommodation, but because it seemed to favour the noxious principles of contralisation, of which he was a determined opponent. Vaughan heard all these remarks with great good humour ;

And when all was said and done, Mr. Goodwin knew that we should all walk up to the top of the ~~new~~ hill, and see how the building looked from the distance. When we were there, and preparing to retrace our steps, he said as he had sent the carriage on to a point in the road via by a short cut to his house. It might have been a short cut by the road, but the way by the fields which led us was anything but one. Over hill and down dale did we tramp through a wooded country, following our guide, who waved on all stragglers with his umbrella. The young lord was charmed with the Rev. Cymon; Vaughan and I enjoyed the walk immensely; but Ballance and de Griggue did not appreciate it, unaccustomed as they were to such exercise, and smiled a sickly smile when their tormentor pointed out some beautiful prospect, or when Ballycrackum told them to "stir their stumps." Mr. Stumpup was the first to lose his temper, and to declare that he had been made to walk already three-quarters of a mile all but two yards and a fraction of an inch more than statistics showed that a man of fifty should walk in a day to preserve his health; and Mr. Watford moved, "That this party do stop and take into consideration the best way of getting on," as an implied vote of want of confidence in their leader.

It was a lovely walk; there was a bright sun and a fresh breeze. The birds sang, the flowers bloomed, and the ripe harvest waved in golden billows along the hill-side. At last we came to the short cut, and found our vehicles; and when we arrived at the little farm-house, even poor Mr. Ballance could not deny that the air on the hills was excellent sauce.

Upon entering the Curate's sanctum, poor Mr. de

Griggue groaned. There was the beer-barrel in one corner, and a pile of books and papers put away in another. There was the red-tiled floor, brilliantly bare, save where a deal table, covered with a snowy cloth stood, laid in bitter mockery of the guests. "Why, oh! why did he make us hungry, and then bring us to this inhospitable—this barbarous place?" so thought more than one of his guests. We were told to run up stairs and wash our hands, while he made the salad. "Run up stairs!" Easier said than done. Mr. de Griggue, being short, knocked his hat; and Mr. Watford, being tall, knocked his head against the roof at the first step. The young lord was the first up and the first down. He tucked up his sleeves and helped to dry the fresh green lettuce with a will; he decanted the wine, drew the beer, and made de Griggue help the old lady who lived in the other side of the farmhouse, and who cooked the dinner, to carry in the potatoes. "You're not ornamental, you know, old boy," he told that gentleman, to his great disgust, "make yourself useful for once in your life." Then came the dinner. The trout had only been caught in time to be fried; the mutton was one degree—and that a small one—removed from venison; the vegetables were of a quality and flavour unknown to the dwellers in cities; the bread was made of wheat, and the beer brewed from hops, incredible as such facts may appear in the present day; then the apricot, tart, and the cream! Such cream!—(Ballycrackum proposed the health of the cow.) Such an omelette!—(Made by Goodfellow himself.) Such cheese! And, finally, such fruit—peaches and nectarines—gifts, tokens of friendship and goodwill, as all his luxuries were, from his parishioners to the honest Curate.. Before the meat was removed, Mr.

Ballance forgot his indignation; de Griggue^t his pomposity; Stumpup his statistics. Each and all forgot every thing but the air on the hills, the goodness of the viands, and the genial welcome of the host. It *was* a merry evening—merry and wise. The young lord had a knack of drawing out every body; he was more on the broad grin than ever. He told some stories and sang some songs that convulsed even de Griggue^t; and then Vaughan, with his sweet thrilling voice, sang strange wild ditties that brought tears into most eyes. The Rev. Cymon and his noble guest got on famously. The Peer was anything but a fool, and saw that he had a superior mind to deal with in time to profit by his visit in more than one way. “He’s an out and out clever fellow,” said he, on the way home, “I wonder what he’d take for his umbrella!”

CHAPTER III.

I THOUGHT how it would be. I have fallen into deep disgrace for what I have been writing. I have won anything but golden opinions from all sorts of persons. “Our Town” does not care about me or my writings a bit; they know who I am, and take us at our real value. Talk about the anonymous character of the press being disadvantageous to the public—no such thing! People know, or fancy they know, who writes what; and it does not much matter whether they are right or wrong, it is all the same in the end. “When ignorance,” *et cetera, et cetera*, “it’s folly” and all the rest of it. So I, having

my new work cut up in the "Literary Ogre," elevate my ductor nasal muscles, and ask my friends (who of course make it a point show me the obnoxious paragraph) "what else could possibly be expected from such a fellow as Jones?" who writes the criticisms for that journal. But when my book is praised in the "London Toadeater," do I intimate that the review was written by my friend Smith, who had dined with me nine times during the last fortnight, and borrowed a five-pound note upon the last occasion when he favoured me with his company? Not I! . I remark casually that the "Toadeater" is an admirably conducted and conscientious journal. I consider that the "Toadeater," the whole "Toadeater"—I was going to add, nothing but the "Toadeater," (but that would not be true)—had discovered my numerous merits, as evinced in the pages of my book (published by Messrs. Paste and Scissors, Abernethy Street); and I lay claim to the admiration of all and every, the conductors, authors, and employés of that Journal, from the editor down to the printer's devil. Thus it is that "Our Town" has set the whole country side by the ears. Every gentleman of property whose surname, be it long or short, begins with a "G," has a good-natured friend (as aforesaid) who pays him a morning call, with this fresh from the press in his pocket, and assures him that he is satirised as Mr. de Griggue, and recommends his taking legal proceedings against the publisher. A noble Earl writes to me all the way from Ireland to say that as his estates lie there, and his title derived from them commences with the syllable "Bally" (just as though Ballys are not as common as blackberries), I must mean to insult *him* and his country in my portraiture of Lord Ballycrackum. He moreover intimates

that a friend, Major O'Blazes, of the Connaught Rangers, will be in England in a week or two to settle sundry small matters for him. Then, half the young ladies I meet simper and blush when I enter the room, and declare that I am "a shocking satirical wretch;" that I am "a dreadful man;" that it is "dangerous to come near me;" and tell me to "go away, please," having previously got me into a corner, out of which, thanks to those preposterous hoops upon which the dear creatures expand their skirts, it is impossible to move; but where I am sufficiently resigned to my imprisonment. There is not one of my female friends, ranging in age from fifteen up to the interminable era which separates suppositious eight and twenty and acknowledged thirty, who does not imagine herself to be reflected from the black mirror of my inkstand as Nelly Dale! What am I to do? Are these sketches to continue, or are they not? If I were a hatter now, I should make my fortune; for my literary caps are no sooner constructed than half-a-dozen customers come struggling for the honour of putting them upon their craniums or those of their friends.

Mr. de Griggue^t saw but little of his noble guest, Lord Ballycrackum, during his stay at the Hall. When he was not in Mr. Dale's garden, he was to be found in Vaughan's studio. He tried hard to persuade that individual to accept Mr. de Griggue^t's invitation to dine with him, if it were only for the sake of playing a game of billiards and smoking a cigar with him (Lord), "For," observed that young nobleman confidentially, "the old Bird," by which general ornithological term he was wont to designate his worthy host, "is so preciously slow; and as for the mother and daughter, my eye! I don't pretend to be a clever chap, you know Vaughan, old fellow, but I'll

be shot if I can't see through their game." It must be confessed that the little canary bird that called Mr. de Griggue "Papa" was twittering round his guest in rather a pertinacious manner, nor was her voluminous Mamma less assiduous in her attentions; until, between them, they fairly drove their quarry out of their hunting grounds, back again to which nothing, save the daily dinner bell, was a spell potent enough to charm him. My Lord liked good things, and Mr. G.'s *artisté*—they used to call them cooks once, provided them for him, and was delighted with the commendations which the Peer bestowed upon his fricandeaus, his ragouts, his suprêmes, and all the rest of those delicacies which your true Briton swears at as "*kickshaws*" when he cannot procure them, and ruins his digestion with when he can. Greatly, however, to the mortification of their ingenious designer, his dishes no longer had a charm for his noble patron. Ballycrackum spent more and more of his time in Mr. Dale's garden, and less and less in the young painter's studio, and when he came back to dinner he had no appetite—by which piece of evidence the astute reader will not fail to discover that he was in love. In love with our Nelly of course—who else? So one fine morning off he sets, paler and more crest-fallen than ever, to Vaughan, of all people in the world, to appoint him confidant and general adviser in the matter which lay closest to his heart.

Of course, Vaughan was delighted to hear it. He was painting a view of the Parsonage: the west front, with Nelly's garden, and Nelly's room, and Nelly's rose-tree twining—oh! cunning lucky rose—up to the window, to peep inside, and blow a kiss of sweet perfume to Nelly upon the wind. He had almost finished it when his friend

came in, and a sunny, breezy, happy-looking picture it was. When he stammered out his story, after much beating about the bush—Vaughan never dreaming of what was coming—the brush fell from his hand, and he turned deadly pale. He left his work, and came and stood by the window with his back to his visitor, and heard all that he had to say without a word in reply.

Suddenly he turned, and, looking his friend full in the face, said, in a low clear voice, “ You have told her this ? ”

“ No, no, no ; by Jove, no. I could not do that ; that’s just what I want you to manage for me.”

“ Me ? ” inquired Vaughan, with that old sad smile that I have known so well.

“ You, yes, you. You’re such a no-end-of-a-clever fellow with women, you know. I’ve heard you say all sorts of pretty things to her. You must tell me what to say, like a jolly old chap, now.”

Vaughan was not much like a jolly old chap just then. There was something rising in his thorax, of which he made some difficulty in disposing.

“ Miss Dale is so far below you in point of rank. A poor curate’s niece ; an orphan.”

“ By Jove, she’s fit to be a Duchess,” broke in Bally-crackum.

“ You can only make her a Countess,” said Vaughan coldly.

“ Yes, but that’s better than nothing,” urged the somewhat crest-fallen Peer ; “ I do love her so, I — ”

“ You must write all about this to your father,”

“ I am of age.”

“ So is your father, I presume. Write to him ; gain his consent ; and then come to me again. If she were

your equal, or nearly your equal, you might propose and be accepted without further delay; but, as she is not your equal, or nearly your equal, for her sake you must obtain the sanction of your family. 'The world is a very good world, as worlds go; but it will not give you credit for wisdom in the choice of a wife, or Miss Dale immunity from scandal after the deadly sin of having made a good match.'

Here Vaughan returned to his easal, and took up, not the brush which he had dropped, but a larger and a coarser one, which he charged with dead black paint, and drew slowly and steadily across the finished painting of the dwelling of Nelly Dale. Stroke followed stroke until the last rose-bud was destroyed, and the last sunbeam blotted out. And when all was done, there was nothing but a black stain upon the canvas before him; and nothing but a hopeless void within his heart.

How long he sat there I know not; the young Earl had gone, left him. He rose at last, with a long, long sigh, shut up his studio and locked the door, and walked forth into the twilight—through the village—past the foot of the hill where flowed the little brook by which he had sate the first day we saw him—looked not at the blazing windows of the Hall—turned to take but one look at the light from the Parsonage window—and walked on, straight on, upon the road, which, faint weary and hopeless, he had trodden a year ago. The midnight heard his quick unwavering tread, and the grey morning found him toiling on, straight on, upon the cold hard road; never once looking behind him or faltering upon his weary march to the great city—the gigantic hot-bed of vice; and intellect, and wonder—to his old haunts, his old companions, but

with a changed mind, a chastened disposition; with a heaving heart and an aching head, but with the shadow of his good angel still following and all-protecting him.

That night I found these few lines upon my table—

“ DEAR FRIEND,—

“ As a wanderer I came amongst you; as a wanderer I take my leave. In a few days you will know the cause of my so sudden departure. God bless you, and all who, like you, gave a new name and a new nature to

“ V. B.”

In a few days the county paper was “ informed,” I cannot tell how or by whom, that a marriage was on the “ *tapis* ”—(why will marriages always be on the “ *tapis* ?” who and what is the “ *tapis* ,” that it should tyrannise over us in this manner, usurping the place of Her Majesty’s English?)—between the noble heir of the Marquis of Skillyvannon, and the “ lovely and accomplished niece of the Rev. T. Dale,” &c. &c. &c.; but the announcement did not go on to say that the “ noble heir ” made his proposals to the “ lovely and accomplished ” object of his adoration, and was incontinently rejected by that young lady.

“ I always feared that your stay here would prove but a dull one, my Lord,” she said, “ but now I am convinced of it, as you have found no better occupation than thinking about poor me. I am grateful for the honour you have done me, but—”

“ It’s no honour at all.”

“ Pardon me, it is. I am not so vain or so romantic as to be persuaded that it is not. Let us call things by their right names, my Lord, as it will be all the more honest. I flatter myself that I should make a passably-good poor man’s wife, but I am sure that I should turn out a most

wretched specimen of a Countess. Let us still call you our friend as before, and forget that this subject has ever been mentioned."

The poor fellow hung his good honest head, and cried like a child over the hand she so frankly gave him. "I'm not half good enough for you, that's it," he said; "if I was only a clever fellow like Vaughan, now, and not so confoundedly rich and stupid as I am, I might have a chance, but it won't do—"

Nelly did not stay to hear the end of his speech; the name he had mentioned banished all the blood from her face and neck, and raised a strange flutter at her pure heart, so she turned and sought her room with the latticed window, and the charming rose which had been painted out in the picture a week before, but which was not forgotten—no, not forgotten.

Meanwhile, strange men with tall white poles and chains, and things on complications of legs, like deformed photographic machines, came wandering over the fields and through the lanes near "Our Town," and we soon found out that the Great North and South Diagonal Railway was coming to do us the honour of cutting us in two, for no other apparent purpose than that of buying some very bad land of Mr. de Griggue (who was a director and a large shareholder), and paying a high price for it. When the railway solicitors came to investigate his title, it turned out that there were about ten acres to which he could not establish a claim, and which still belonged to the Balcarraigns. These were worth about nothing an acre, but still the company had to buy, and Vaughan to sell them. But Vaughan was nowhere to be found to complete the purchase, so Mr. de Griggue took upon

himself to give the railway officials possession, and to indemnify them against the consequences. So the works went on, but, scarcely had a spade been struck into the soil, when Mr. de Griggue suddenly changed his mind, and violently opposed the passage of the line through his estate, doubled his demands—already exorbitant—for compensation, and thereby sent the Great North and South Diagonal back again to its direct route, a mile and a-half from our village. There was a mine of copper under the waste land—Sir Vaughan Balcarraign's last scrap of his inheritance—and, as he was not there to know anything about it, why Mr. de Griggue held his tongue, and took steps for purchasing the land of its absent owner before he became aware of its immense value.

CHAPTER IV.

THE Great Diagonal Railway was (according to its prospectus) an undertaking that could not fail to make the fortune of any individual who should be fortunate enough to be permitted by an indulgent directory to hold its shares. Its design (its promoter observed) was vast—its theory within the capacity of the merest child. What could be more simple? England is the workshop of the world. Admit this fact, and the Great Diagonal Railway follows as a matter of course! Manufactured articles have to be exported, Good. Very well, then, establish two grand harbours at Milford Haven and Dover; two others at Hull and Liverpool, and carry through two lines of

railways direct to and from these points, and they will cross England like the letter X, intersecting each other in the heart of the manufacturing districts. No matter, then, from whence your trade comes, or whither it goes—east, west, north, or south—you are prepared to carry it without loss of time, and ship it to any part of the world, or distribute it over the country by the established railroads, which will, as a matter of course, become mere feeders to the great Diagonals. “Nothing could be more simple, my dear sir,” said the bland projector of this gigantic scheme to Mr. de Griggue, “to a gentleman of your capacity; I need not enter into details, you must see at a glance the extraordinary prize which I am enabled to place within your grasp. A Director of the Great Diagonal will—but no matter, perhaps I am betraying confidence—but really there will be so many members of the Peerage connected with it, that Government will hardly permit any one of their body to remain a commoner, with the enormous fortune that he will realize; no, Sir, it will require an Earl *at least* to spend it. So Mr. de Grigguct became a Director of the Great Diagonal, and took a great number of its shares, and what was considerably more to the purpose, paid for them, a proceeding which was not demanded of some of his noble co-adjutors in its direction, whose coronets were hung out as a glittering bait for the *“Commune vulgus,”* just as you tow a piece of tin overboard—with a hook—for mackerel.

Meanwhile, the art critics of the great Metropolis were perplexed in their minds, concerning a strange picture which appeared at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, and which, owing to some mistake, had no artist's name and no title in the catalogue. It was No. 1,011, that was

all. Now, the British public has a great reverence for names. Shakespeare never made a greater mistake than when he wrote those lines about a rose, which everybody misquotes. There is *every thing* in a name, especially with your small critic. In matters of art, people will not think for themselves, they praise what Snooks praises, and turn up their noses at what Brown rejects. The Snookses and the Browns take their cue from the Titans of criticism, and swim round them like minnows, in the depths which these great ones alone can fathom, and strive to imitate with their puny wriggling the action of their mighty arms. Until these magnates have spoken out, your Snookses and Browns are dreadfully puzzled what to say. Another tribe of critics I wot of—fellows who measure art with a foot-rule and tailor's pattern-book, who prate of *rules* of *art*, and without a spark of feeling in their composition, carp at anything and everything—no matter how pleasing, rich or true it may be—that it does not come within the four corners of their beloved ordinances. These gentry do not wait for the word of command, their business is to find fault, and they find it accordingly; if it is not present they make it, and so it comes to the same thing either way. Whilst Messrs. Snooks and Brown were waiting to be primed and loaded, Messrs. Cavil and Nag took No. 1,011 in hand, turned it upside down, inside out, and pulled it to pieces handsomely. They informed an attentive public that it was full of crudities, (a favourite expression with Signors C. and N.,) that, according to all recognised art, the grass in the left-hand corner of the picture should have been brown, instead of being, as the painter had ignorantly rendered it, green. The sunshine, moreover, was ab-

surdly bright, and the water ridiculously clear. The principal figure, too, was standing with his left foot foremost, which, considering that he wore a scarlet tunic, was an unpardonable offence, as all figures in scarlet should stand—according to the highest authorities amongst the old masters—with both feet in a line. These and many other remarks of an equally valuable character were the public treated to by Nag, Cavil, and Co. Snooks and Brown in their notices of the Exhibition passed by No. 1,011, giving it as wide a berth as possible; they had the sense to perceive that it was either wonderfully good or execrably bad: it was quite out of the common way, and out of their depth. They called it “a curious picture, a remarkable production, to which we shall return before we conclude our notice;” thus leaving it open for them to praise or blame it just as matters turned out. At length a real critic—a bold conscientious thinking man, who had stood for hours in all sorts of lights, opposite the unknown picture—set his thoughts up in type, and at a wave of his gold pen all the small fry and scum of criticism bowed down to him, like the imps in the transformation scene of a pantomime when the good Fairy appears in the halls of dazzling light. He declared it to be a masterpiece. He said that its air could be breathed; that its sun refreshed him in that damp cold weather; that the grass was alive, wavy and moist with dew; and that the people represented in it had bodies inside their clothes, and minds inside their bodies. What Cavil called “*crudity*” he termed “*originality*.
What Nag condemned as “*ignorance*” he praised as “*creative power*.
He pointed out faults, certainly, but they were kindly and judiciously found, and above all, were *true*. The name-

less painter saw at last that he was appreciated, and that, in his critic he had found a friend. It then came out that No. 1,011 was by a certain Mr. Vaughan, quite an unknown artist, whom Messrs. Snooks and Brown began to bespatter with the most fulsome flattery; Vaughan was in every body's mouth, and sundry picture dealers who had purchased sketches of him upon his first appearance in London, began to exhibit his productions in the centre of their windows, and placidly to ask and pocket for them as many guineas as they had reluctantly given shillings to the poor unknown hungry fellow, who had striven so hard to turn them into honest bread.

I never heard from Vaughan from the day when he left "Our Town" so suddenly, till his fame reached us as a great painter—the founder of a new school of art. I wrote to congratulate him, and received such a feeling noble answer, as convinced me that I was never mistaken in him, and that in poverty or affluence his was the same true heart as of old.

One morning an advertisement at the top of that mysterious second column of the "*Times*" appeared, to the effect that if Sir Vaughan Balcarraign, Bart., would communicate with Messrs. Tap and Spiver, of Lincoln's Inn, where a letter could be directed to him, he would bestow a great favour on the advertiser. Vaughan sent his address, and that same afternoon arrived, not a letter, but Mr. de Griggue, who was considerably taken back when he discovered that Vaughan the Painter and Vaughan the Baronet were one and the same individual. Now, my friend thought a great deal less of himself as a Baronet getting into scrapes and making a bad name, than in his new capacity as an artist, getting out of them and earning a

good one. Mr. de Griggue's mind took a contrary impression, and all the respect which he might have felt for the man of title was effaced by the appearance of the man of art. He proceeded, without much preface, to open the business which he had in hand. It was about some waste land upon the estate which had once belonged to the Balcarraigns—a mere matter of form, he said. The land ought certainly to have been conveyed with the rest—it was for Vaughan to do so now; it might hereafter become an inconvenience, and the sooner it was settled the better, and so forth and so on, holding up the high hand, and demanding a conveyance of the acres, which the Great Diagonal could not afford to purchase at the price set upon them by this conscientious gentleman—as a matter of right, but hinting that some additional compensation would not be refused. The fact was, Mr. de Griggue was mistaking his man; a painter's studio is not a handsome place, it is always in the wildest disorder, redolent of dust, and innocent of dusters. He had not heard of Vaughan's success. How should he? He never read anything but the price current and the reports of the Great Diagonal Railway. His vulgar mind recognised artists only as a sort of higher class of tradesmen, inhabiting the housekeeper's room of society, and only to be summoned to the drawing-room when wanted to do something for its inmates.

Vaughan heard all that his visitor had to say, and was very cold and short in his manner to that worthy. " You say, sir, that you have a right to this land; I know that it is valueless, but if you think it worth while to make a title to it, I will attend you at your solicitor's, and sign any deed he may prepare for that purpose."

By a strange coincidence, Mr. de Griggue had just come from his legal adviser, and curiously enough had in his pocket the very deed Vaughan was required to sign. Bravo, Mr. de Griggue! Vaughan, therefore, to cut the matter short, and end an unpleasant subject once and for ever, cleared—not without some difficulty—a space upon his table whereon to spread the deed, and sticking a rusty old steel pen, which he found in the fireplace, on the end of a painting brush, proceeded to sign away the “waste land” to good Mr. de Griggue and his heirs for ever.

CHAPTER V.

WE left Sir Vaughan Balcarraign pen in hand, about to sign away the “waste land” to good Mr. de Griggue. But before we allow him to do so, it would be as well if we were to see how things have been going on in, and concerning “Our Town,” whilst the picture without a name was puzzling the London critics, and Mr. de Griggue was advertising for its author, with the excellent and praiseworthy purpose of despoiling him of what remained of his inheritance.

The Great Diagonal Railway and Dock Company was an immense success,—so much so, that the directors, with that high patriotism which guided all their actions, obtained leave from Parliament to issue a thousand extra shares, for the sole purpose (as was stated in a long prospectus, signed by all the board) of bringing independence and luxury home to a few more homes in “Merrie Eng-

lande," and making the fortunes of a score or so more of the practical and discerning Britons. It is a curious thing, but the more you ask for in these times, the more you get. Seek for a hundred pounds to complete an invention, or carry on a speculation, and you shall not find it; put a bold face upon the matter, and roundly demand a million, and you are pretty sure to get it, if you are provided with a sufficiently long trumpet, and a strong pair of lungs at the small end of it.

So the Great Diagonal Railway Company scattered thousands like halfpence, and talked only in figures, with a goodly array of ciphers after them. And all practical people shook their heads, and said it was grand—very grand, but dangerous, and advised their dear friends to have nothing to say to it, and jumped into a cab and drove straight off to the office, and took shares for themselves. For your true speculator is never happy unless he has outwitted somebody, and is not contented in making his own fortune, unless his success is brought out by a back-ground of some one else's failure. I know very well what a soured, disappointed person I must be to say all this. Mr. A—, I shall be told, is as pleased to hear of the profitable speculation which old B— has made, as if he had gained the money himself—*Is he?* And B—, he wishes, "my dear boy, that he had had an opportunity of putting you up to the good thing while it lasted—*Does he?* Well! no matter,—everybody was running after the Great Diagonal, and trying to get the best of his neighbour, "Our Town" was bit with the speculative fever. Mr. Ballance, the banker, abused the whole concern, and was thereby known to be deeply interested in it. The little Antiquary wrote a paper upon what might be discovered

in excavating the tunnel that was to pass through the hill—into which (the paper, not the tunnel) he introduced the famous “pump” question, and read it (the paper, again), in solemn silence, at our Institute. My excellent friend, Mr. Watford, certainly objected to the scheme as unconstitutional, and tending towards centralization ; but Stumpup, the statistician, was in ecstacies with it,—“for,” said he, “its calculations have three-eighths of a fallacy per ten thousand figures less than the majority of published prospectuses.” You may imagine the favour with which the speculation was regarded, when I tell you that Mr. Dale was induced to withdraw his savings, and Nelly’s little fortune—(for Nelly was an heiress, Nelly had seventeen pounds per annum in the funds)—from the safe but matter-of-fact three per cents., and to embark them in the brilliant and enriching scheme that was to make them rich, and so spread happiness around them.

Now, Mr. de Griggue, having sunk the greater portion of his available fortune in this mighty enterprise, and finding that no immediate return was likely to arise, and being far too speculative to sell his shares at the trumpery ten per cent. profit which presented itself, when, by retaining them, their value would be quadrupled—and being innately fond of the popular science of over-reaching your neighbour, and being short of ready money, and avaricious to a degree—bethought himself, as we have seen, of a notable plan of robbing Vaughan Balcarraign of his copper mine, which lay under the “waste land,” that ought, according to the story that he told his victim, to have been conveyed with the rest of the estate. No one knew better than Mr. de Griggue that this account was false, except, perhaps, Mr. de Griggue’s solicitor, who drew up the

deed which Vaughan had stretched out before him upon the studio table. Therefore, the worthy possessor of the Balcarraign estates did not tell his man of law one word of what he had said to Vaughan, but, to deceive him, had the conveyance prepared as if a fresh and separate purchase was to be made; and, as it was necessary to insert the sum to be paid, one hundred pounds was mentioned in the deed as the purchase-money.

Vaughan Balcarraign believed all that his visitor had told him about his signature being required only as a matter of form, and was in the act of affixing it to the parchment, when his eye caught those mystic words, "ONE HUNDRED POUNDS." He had got as far as the "g" in his Christian name, when he looked again, and the words struck him as being hardly in accordance with Mr. de Griggue's statement. He laid down his pen, and read the context. "What is this I see?" he asked, placing his finger upon the words. "Oh, merely the consideration—nothing more. You see, the law insists upon something being paid as consideration—yes, yes—consideration," replied Mr. de Griggue, getting rather redder than became him.

"But why one hundred pounds?"

"Make it two, if you are not satisfied," said vulgar wealth.

"Sir," exclaimed proud poverty, rising, "let us understand one another. If this land be, as you say, yours by right, why offer me one hundred pounds for it? If it be mine still, why insult me by doubling an insulting offer?"

Mr. de Griggue now saw his mistake. If he had reduced his one hundred pounds to a nominal sixpence, as the consideration, he would have gained his point; as it

was, his vulgar mind saw but one cause for Vaughan's objection—he doubled his bid, and lost it.

"Well, really, I thought to serve you," he answered. "I—I did not want to be hard upon you. I heard that you were poor, and so—" he continued, after much stammering, "I thought that a little gift—"

Worse and worse.

"Mr. de Griggue," thundered Vaughan, "if I have, of my own right, as much land of my father's as will bury a dog, I will keep it. If I am reduced to my last penny, I will not condescend to accept another from you. As for the business which has brought you here, I will get those who understand it to look into it closely—closely, Sir. For the present, Sir—there is the door—go!"

As soon as Mr. de Griggue could recover the shock of a man of his wealth being told to "go," he did "go," and left the studio (metaphorically speaking) with his tail between his legs, and with a small, but highly obnoxious domestic insect in his ear.

It was only gradually that the victims found out the plain, staring, naked *ruin* that had come upon them. They were not professional speculators, and monied men, who had retained the shares, but poor widows, half-pay officers, orphans, and young wives, who had invested their whole fortunes, under the persuasive eloquence of the fashionable gentleman, for the little one—the first hearth flower of their new homes.

Mr. de Griggue was the only director deceived—of the others, some had managed to get out of the concern, satisfied with their first profits—some had followed the example of the fashionable gentleman—others had nothing to lose, and remained, puffing their innocence in the

papers, and promising a satisfactory explanation of their conduct, which, when it came, made it appear ten times worse than it was supposed to be.

Gigantic works were commenced, large contracts had been entered into, there was not ten pounds to meet the demands, the fashionable gentleman had forged, right and left, and drew out of the bank every sixpence before he decamped.

In our village the shops were not opened the day the news came; people congregated in the street, and talked in whispers as though some one were dead. Every third man, comfortable, contented, and happy but a few months ago, was now a beggar.

Three days after the visit of Mr. de Griggue to Vaughan's studio, Vaughan presented himself to his family lawyer, and laid before him the deed which that worthy had tried to induce him to sign.

"Why, how you are getting on in the world, Sir Vaughan," said jolly little Mr. Dimple, the attorney, "quite a great man, I declare; you will regain back the family estates if you live long enough. Eh, eh. Why, they say your county is half ruined by this Diagonal swindle," said the little man quickly; "hope you have not had any finger in the pie?"

"Not I," replied Vaughan. "I swore that I would never play or gamble again, and these affairs come under those heads in my estimation."

"Quite right, quite right," said Mr. Dimple. "Ah, poor people, poor people—sad, isn't it? I am employed by the creditors to make out a list of shareholders liable. See, you can tell by the names and descriptions who will be quite ruined. For instance, here's one, *The Reverend*

Mr. Dale, five shares; *Miss Eleanor Dale*, five shares. Some good, simple clergyman and his child, I'll be bound, and they are ruined, quite ruined. Why, what is the matter? are you ill?"

Vaughan had flushed crimson, turned deadly pale, and clung to the table for support.

"No, nothing; no, don't ring; I am well now; just a spasm, nothing more. Listen, Mr. Dimple, I am an impulsive, headstrong fellow, as you know of old. I must have those ten shares, and you must get them for me."

"But the responsibility ——"

"Must be mine; don't say another word, except to tell me how I am to get them."

"Why, if you *will* be such a fool, the thing is easy enough. Mr. Dale sent them to Barter and Higgle, the stockbrokers, to be disposed of the day before the smash; they could not get rid of them, and hold them now."

"Then, purchase them for me," said Vaughan, "only remember they became mine when they were at their highest value, *the day before the swindle was exposed.*"

It was with a heavy heart that Mr. Dale opened the letter with the cramped formal direction and portentious seal, which lay glaring at him on his plate at breakfast the next morning. He naturally concluded that it contained the official announcement of his liability to the creditors of the Great Northern Diagonal, and was astonished, as you may imagine, when he learnt how things really stood. A gentleman had bought his shares—so the epistle ran—and enclosed was a bank post bill for the purchase-money. Who the "gentleman" was did not appear. Mr. Dale wrote by return of post to enquire. His sensitive mind could not bear the idea of another person being sacrificed

for his profit, and in his stead ; at any rate, he begged to be allowed to return the money paid for a worse than valueless consideration. Messrs. Barter and Higgle replied that they fully appreciated the honourable intentions of the reverend correspondent, but under existing circumstances had no alternative than to decline to communicate the name of their client. How Vaughan chuckled as he dictated the wordy roundabout answer to the good old man's letter.

Vaughan, as we know, left our village upon the supposition that Nelly Dale would not fail to accept the offer of marriage which Lord Ballycrackum had told him that it was his intention to make her. He never doubted for a moment that she would accept him. Soured and dispirited as he then was with the world and himself, he contended that a title and a fortune would draw Nelly to God's holy altar, to tell a practical lie, as they would and will draw ninety-nine out of a hundred of her sex. But he did not know our Nelly. It was only when he saw *Miss* Dale entered in Mr. Dimple's black list that any doubt crossed his mind that their marriage had not taken place. He went to his club, and learnt what all the town had been talking about for a week, namely, that the eccentric peer had espoused Madamoiselle Zepherina, of the Italian Opera, who, as far as standing for an inordinate length of time upon the extreme end of one toe may be taken to indicate the possession of moral and intellectual acquirements, was a paragon of virtue and refinement. Vaughan became anxious and unsettled after this intelligence ; at last an event occurred that brought him once more into "Our Town".

The newspapers all over the country soon began to

announce a grand sale which was about to take place of the furniture and effects, etc. in the sumptuous mansion, etc. of Mr. de Griggue, who was about to reside abroad for the benefit of his health; *id est* had bolted to Boulogne to escape his creditors. Jews, brokers, and hucksters, of every grade of honesty and dirtiness appeared to spring up all at once upon the day of view, and took possession of the premises, lounged on the sumptuous ottomans, reposed their limbs, redolent of tobacco smoke and kindred savours, in the elegant chairs, and jotted down their astute calculations with grimey pencils on the inlaid tables. They poked about, and tapped, and shook, and kicked the furniture, as though their chief desire was to damage it as much as possible, making incomprehensible hieroglyphics in their catalogues, the while to denote the extreme worth thereof. They peeped into the bed-rooms, and cut open the beds. They pried into the cupboards and boxes and shelves. They bored everybody to death to allow them to buy everything in the house for them. They made villainous combinations among themselves to cheat and swindle the auctioneer, the owner, and the public, reserving for themselves the more exciting and difficult operation of cheating and swindling each other over the joint-stock spoil afterwards. Ruin was a thing that appeared to be familiar to most of them; and they laughed and joked over the various "lots," the parting with which suggested it. I am inclined to give Pythagoras a fair hearing when I see a concourse of Jew-brokers at a sale. I am certain that they have been hyenas in a former stage of existence, and that they will become vultures in the next. Of course all this is very illiberal and bigoted, but I cannot help it. I cannot see a pair of

filthy claw-like hands covered over with magnificent rings, and a ragged coffee-coloured shirt buttoned with diamond studs, and think that there can be anything human, or honest or estimable in any way, in that moving heap of dirt and finery and squalor. I do like to see fingers with the rough marks of toil upon them. I don't mind a dirty shirt with a true heart beating underneath it, but I know that the rings and chains and trinkets that I saw gathering at Mr. de Griggue's sale were, to their wearers, like the scalps hung round the belt of an Indian chief—trophies of warfare; in their case not marks of honour, but evidence very often of want, and trickery, and ruin; won without danger, and held without remorse.

The sale ended at last, and the old house, stripped of its finery and show, stood with smokeless chimneys and sightless windows in the glare of the setting sun as it had stood in the evening when the orphan wanderer first set foot in "Our Town." All the costly pieces of splendid bad taste which Mr. de Griggue had accumulated within the walls were scattered east, west, north, and south; no one could tell whither or to whom, but everything that belonged to the place and had been left there by the Balcarraigns was purchased by Vaughan, who let nothing escape him that had appertained to any of his family. He was left alone in the house of his ancestors; his mother's picture and an old-fashioned desk lay on the floor beside him, and he fell into a deep reverie, in which all the various phases of his eventful life presented themselves in succession. The present at length appeared. He felt that he was a better man, a happier, a richer, every day; he was loved, respected by many, the past was being slowly but surely redeemed, and the great hope of his life was

nearly within his grasp, but he did not dare to stretch his hand to claim it. A sound of voices in the hall below aroused him, a light step was on the stair, a white flash of light appeared to dart into the room, a cry of surprise, and the queen of his thoughts and the ruler of his destiny stood flushed and trembling before him. Another instant and she would have fallen, but he sprang forward uttering but one word—"Nelly!"

It was enough—the name upon his lips, and the love in his eyes, told a more eloquent history than I can write. The pent-up emotions of years were loosened in one word. Before Mr. Dale's slower footsteps had ascended the stair, one little word more was spoken—"Nelly,"—was changed to "*My* Nelly," and Nelly did not repudiate the possession.

CHANGE FOR A HUNDRED.

IT was market-day in a great noisy manufacturing town not many thousand miles removed from Lancashire, and the confines of that neighbouring county so celebrated for the “ ‘cuteness’ ” of its inhabitants. The railways had brought in thousands of people that morning, from all parts of the adjacent country—most for business, some for pleasure, some for a convenient mixture of both. Men came in to make money, and made it or not, according to circumstances ; their wives and daughters came in to spend money, and found no difficulty in accomplishing their object ; other people came in for other purposes (as will appear before the conclusion of this faithful narrative), and were equally successful in carrying them out.

In the Exchange, merchants and cotton-spinners, and brokers and agents, thronged together, and were as busy as bees in a hive. What were they doing ? Ah ! that I cannot say. Hundreds of thousands of pounds, I am told, change owners on market-day in this same Exchange, without a scrap of writing, or earnest, to bind the bargains. Who can tell what great transactions were being clenched ? Perhaps some one was buying up all the cotton in Liverpool ; perhaps the money was being found for some invention that will provide broadcloth at sixpence a

yard ; perhaps that vulgar-looking old fellow, to whom all are touching their hats, on account of his reputed wealth, is buying what he knows very well he never will be able to pay for ; and who knows but that those sanctified individuals in white neckcloths are contracting for a supply of thread, bearing a lie upon its label, in order to cheat the poor seamstress of her due ? Such things are done, we know, thanks to that much-vilified tribunal—Her Majesty's High Court of Chancery !

But we have little to do with the Exchange and those who frequent it. This great town—which is to be nameless, for certain sufficient reasons—goes to dinner at two o'clock, eats a great deal of cold meat, and drinks a great deal of hot wine ; and being a town of inferior organisation, gastronomically speaking, is not afflicted with those frightful consequences from which any other town of more fashionable and dyspeptic habits would suffer. Consequently, for about one hour after the time I have named, there is a lull in the transaction of business ; and then, whilst the bees are on their return to their work, much shopping takes place.

The principal jewellers in this nameless town are Messrs. Elephant and Castle, and a goodly sight their shop-window affords upon market-day, especially when the old year is at its last gasp, and all the "pretty-pretties" for new year's gifts are exhibited in glittering rows therein. So thinks an elderly gentleman from the country, a clergyman of the Church of England evidently, from his spotless white neckcloth, smug chin, and the heavy gold seals that hang, *more majorum*, after the fashion of our ancestors, from his fob. There is a well-to-do creaking in his carefully polished boots, and a smile upon his ruddy cheeks that

bodes well : he is altogether the sort of person at whose table you would like to have a place, and in whose will you would have no objection to find your name.

Mr. Elephant (Castle, his partner, is at home) has a high respect for the cloth, so he bows profoundly to the clergyman as he enters, and his reverence, who is urbanity itself, bows to Mr. Elephant in return. The jeweller is charmed. Politeness is not a staple commodity in this nameless town, Great is its wealth ; but the magic "tuppence a week," which in some other quarters is devoted to the acquisition of manners, has been but sparingly expended by the parents of the present generation of its denizens. Mr. Elephant knows a gentleman when he sees one ; and, sending his young man to wait upon some other customer, attends to the stranger himself.

The simple-minded pastor at once states his errand. Thursday is New Year's Day, and Mrs. Dulcimer must have her accustomed present. What shall it be ? Something useful, you know, and not *very* expensive ; not more than thirty, or perhaps *for-ty* pounds.

It is pleasant to hear the good man speak of money ! It is clear that he prizes it only as the means of giving pleasure to others.

Many valuable trinkets are exhibited for selection, but are rejected with a corresponding number of smiles by Mr. Dulcimer, as "trifles." At last a very solid gold watch, with chain and pendants, heavy and plain, fit for the wife of a bishop, is produced and approved. Fifty pounds is the price, and whilst Mr. Elephant's young man is finding a case wherein to pack it, the Rev. Blank Dulcimer takes from his pocket a fat black pocket-book, and from its interior a bank-note for one hundred pounds. He was just

such a man as you would expect to have such a pocket-book, and such a pocket-book would not have been complete without such a large crisp bank-note in it. There are some people, whose very tooth-picks proclaim their respectability.

The Rev. Blank Dulcimer was very sorry he must trouble Mr. Elephant for change—Mr. Elephant would be only too happy to oblige him. Mr. Elephant could easily oblige him upon market-day. The respectable pocket-book, with fifty pounds in small notes in it, is placed in one ample pocket, the new watch, in shining morocco case, is carefully deposited in another, and the reverend purchaser is leaving the shop politely as he entered it, when a young man, dressed in the extreme of fashion—so far in the extreme as to be in danger of tumbling over the other side into the abyss of vulgarity—bustles rudely in, and runs against his reverence.

The good man is not angry, only hurt ; stooping to pick up his hat, which had been displaced in the shock, he furtively rubs his damaged shin, and, upon recovering himself, recognises the youth who caused the mischief.

“ Why, bless my heart, Frank, what brings you here ? ”

“ Oh, I’ve come to buy something for Sophy, Sir ; but I hope I have not hurt you ? ”

“ No, not much ; but you should not be so impetuous. Are you returning by the 4.15 train ? ”

“ Yes, Sir, I think so,” replied the youth.

“ Then we may as well travel together. I want to speak to you about the shooting over the glebe lands ; so buy your baubles, my dear boy—buy your baubles—at once.”

The dear boy lost no time. He selected a diamond and

opal necklet, brooch, and bracelet to match; value fifty pounds, net cash—Sophy was a lucky girl!—offered a hundred pound note in payment, and demanded change—not as his reverend acquaintance had done, as a matter of favour, but as his right.

"There! change that," he said, and flung his note on the counter.

Now, it seemed to good Mr. Elephant, that there could be no possibility of danger in changing a note even for so unusual an amount, when presented by a gentleman of Mr. Dulcimer's appearance and manners—*Mr. Dulcimer!* why, he might be an Archbishop!—but this young rapid, with his hands thrust in the pockets of his peg-top trousers, with his ballet-dancer pin, and bird's-eye scarf, chewing a tooth-pick, with his hat cocked, was a very different sort of customer. He could not be a bad character himself—oh, no! did not the divine call him "Frank," and would he "frank" any but highly respectable people? But young men will be young men, and sometimes keep very bad company. He might have been imposed upon himself. So, the Exchange being near at hand, Mr. Elephant despatched young Rapid's note to the master of that place to be scrutinised, pretending all the time that he was sending it out to be changed. The messenger returned, and whispered to his employer that the report was that the note was a perfectly good one, and he—rather ashamed of himself for having kept his worthy customer waiting whilst he indulged in such unworthy suspicions—hastily changed the defaced note, and, having handed the difference and Sophy's "baubles" to Rapid, was bowing his customers out, when—oh, that this pen should have to record it!—a policeman,

with haste and excitement, dashed into the shop and seized that reverend gentleman and his lively young friend by their collars, and I am sorry to add that the respectability of the former dropped from him like a cloak, and he stood trembling, the very picture of a detected swindler.

"W—w—w—what's the meaning of this?" gasped poor Mr. Elephant.

"Why, that you have got two of the most notorious forgers in England in your shop—that's all," replied the man in blue, proceeding to handcuff his prisoners.

"Have you changed any notes for them?"

"Y—y—yes, t—two, of a hundred a-piece."

"They are forgeries, then, the cleverest out. Here, give them to me." Mr. Elephant obeyed mechanically. "I shall have to produce them at the police station to make the charge. Hi! cab," and the constable, having secured the darbies on his captives, thrust them into the cab, and, having told the still confused jeweller to come along as quick as he could "to swear agin them," drove off—*where?*

Echo makes the usual response! For never, from that moment has Mr. Elephant set his gaze upon either of his customers; the pretended policeman who took them into custody; the cabman who drove them away; the watch; the jewellery; the change, or the perfectly good Bank of England notes for one hundred pounds a-piece, with which their ingenious fraud was committed.

“ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.”

CHAPTER I.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

I SAY it does not matter what sort of a night it was, and if I am not allowed to tell my own story in my own way I will not tell it at all. There.

Time was when I should merely have had to tell you that it was the last night of the old year, to let you know exactly what sort of weather it was, but seasons are sadly out of joint now-a-days, and our good old inveterate summers and winters have gone out with the good old inveterate Whigs and Tories, whom they scorched and froze. We have a sort of coalition Cabinet conducting affairs in the clerk of the weather's department, in which the snow and the sunshine, and the frost and the heat are represented all the year round, and which blows hot and cold at times unexpectedly and inopportunely, like many another coalition that could be named.

It was not a nice night to be out in. The streets were ankle deep in slush, and a north-east wind, compounded of sand paper and three-cornered files, met you at every turn, and cut you across the face till your eyes watered with the

pain. A gusty, ill-tempered wind it was, that seemed as though it had a spite against the houses for keeping their occupants warm and comfortable out of its reach, that charged against the windows through which the blaze of bright fires might be seen, that sneaked down chimneys, trying in vain to get at those assembled round the hearth, and being met and driven back by the flying sparks and the hot black smoke, moaned and shrieked with vexation, and dashing back into the cold wet streets, vented its spite upon all who were yet abroad, rasping them savagely. And yet hundreds of people were out in the public markets, and the narrow streets that led to them, trudging along in defiance of wind and rain, some returning home laden with goodly parcels containing raw materials for the new year's dinner; others, outward bound, carrying bundles to the pawn-shop; some with money in their pockets and mirth in their faces; others with empty purses and aching hearts; some thinking of the future with hope, and looking back upon the past twelve months with honest pride; others, again, seeing in the coming new year nothing more than a long array of weary days and nights. All sorts of persons were abroad, for was it not Saturday night? The last Saturday night of the year; and you, cosily ensconced in an easy-chair by your warm fireside, frequenting in your walks and drives *respectable* quarters only, can tell about as much of what was going on in and about Paddington market that night—wet and wretched though it was—as you can of the dinner set before the Khan of Tartary this day one century ago.

How should you know? You have never been sent out marketing like Tommy Tott, bearing upon your unaided shoulders the sole responsibility of the New Year's dinner.

If you ever happen to be so commissioned—I am not a betting man, and know what has been said about arguments and wagers, but I will bet you three to one that you will not make twenty shillings go as far as Tommy Tott spun out his half sovereign. If you knew Tommy you would not take the bet. Tommy was an old hand at this sort of thing. This was not the first time by many that he had dragged that voracious basket half over Lisson-grove and the Edgware-road, or had been carried *nolens volens* over the other half by that ungovernable umbrella. For be it known and remembered that Tommy Tott, like his father, was very small, and the family umbrella, like his mother, was very large; but only in that respect did it resemble Mrs. T.—being, as was generally known, and by no one better than by Tommy, to be the most headstrong, intractable structure of cotton and whalebone ever joined together under the pretence of protecting one against the rain. No one knows what its original colour was. In the memory of the oldest Tott the hue of its covering had never been anything but what it is now—that of thrice-watered tea leaves. The stick is one, or perhaps two sizes smaller than an ordinary tent pole, and the handle, which is like an ossified turkey's head with the crown shaved, has a most villainous expression and unaccommodating disposition. When closed it will hook people as they pass you, no matter how carefully you hold it, but as for catching any thing that you *want* to catch with it, that is quite out of the question. Still, with all its faults, it was useful. It was a very pyramid of Egypt for strength. I should like to see the storm that could beat through it, or the gust that could turn it inside out. On such a night as this you may be sure that the umbr-

had its own way with Tommy Tott, and as the basket on his arm began to fill, so did the little control he exercised over his tyrant slip away, until, notwithstanding the ballast he had taken in during his voyage, he was driven about like a ship in a storm—down streets into which he had no business to go—into shops where he did not want to deal—past places where he wished to stop—taken along the wrong side of the street, and once lifted clean off his legs into a costermonger's barrow. Tommy Tott had that peculiarity, common to all small people, of lifting his umbrella when he met a very tall man to let the tall man pass under—a manœuvre which, of course, resulted in a struggle and an inextricable confusion of whalebone, remedied at last by his tyrant taking advantage of a gust of wind and carrying Tommy bodily into the next street. If you suppose that this conduct on the part of the family umbrella disconcerted Tommy Tott, or caused him to forget one single article of his numerous commissions, you are greatly mistaken. No, his plan was to learn by heart all he had to get; and as the astrologers of old said their Abracadabrica, so did our Tommy repeat his instructions over and over again, leaving out each item from the list as it was placed in the basket until he had nothing left to say, and then the umbrella took him home.

Tommy was in the best of humours, spite of the rain and wind, for he had got the goose seven-pence halfpenny cheaper than the expected price, and the loaf had fallen another halfpenny, as if on purpose to allow him to purchase the dozen oranges, which were contingent upon some such financial skill on the part of the Chancellor of the Tott Exchequer.

Perhaps it was because the oranges knew that they were

supernumeraries, that, being in the very jaws of the voracious basket, now gorged to repletion, they became unaccommodating, and *would* roll out into the gutter, causing poor Tommy many a push and kick as he struggled after them, amongst the legs of busy bargainers like himself, while above him the family umbrella carried desolation to hats, poked its points into shirt collars, and dripped the coldest water down the warmest parts of the necks, into which they insinuated themselves with a cunning unknown to all other umbrella points.

Tommy was the only son and hope of the Tott family; heir to all their estates, rights, titles, hereditaments, corporeal and incorporeal whatsoever and wheresoever situate, though the exact scope of the inheritance destined to be accumulated for him out of the eighteen shillings a-week which his father received as clerk to Mr. Moseley, the accountant, had not, at the time of which I have been speaking, been accurately ascertained.

Tommy was not the only Tott; first, there was Margaret, who, though but a year and a-half older than her brother, was almost a young woman, whilst he, from his diminutive figure and winning ways, remained quite a child. She was employed in a large paper mill, where she was earning quite a little fortune—six shillings a-week!

The glossy paper, my dear young lady, upon which you write, would not be so smooth for your fair fingers to pass over, had it not been for Meg Tott, whose work it was to remove every dot, every inequality from its surface, before the glazing process. This was work for light hands and sharp eyes, and not too laborious, or it would not have suited Meggy. Her face was fair, paler than your own, and her figure perhaps as slight—her smile as sweet and

pensive, but her cheek was sunken, and her eyes too bright, and there was a fitful flutter at her heart, which those who love you pray to God that you may never feel.

Could I but present Margaret enveloped in soft white muslin and cachemere, reclining upon a satin couch, in silken slippers, in the subdued light of an elegantly furnished boudoir, no one can tell with what a charming picture I should fill several pages of this true story. But Meg wore an oft-washed cotton gown, and trudged to her work in hob-nailed shoes through the mud and rain, and tried to make a hearty dinner of bacon and cabbage when she came home, so that romance and sentiment, as far as she is concerned, would be quite out of place. Do you think that she walked home from the mill alone ?

Do you think that if a young man called for her every evening as regularly as the clock struck six, and walked home by her side, that our Meg was acting improperly ?

Because if you think the first you don't know Charley Power.

And if you think the second you don't know our Meg.

Charley was an honest fellow, though an auctioneer's clerk, and a good and a kind fellow too, as Meg was not ashamed of telling anybody. If you wish to see that young damsel to advantage, I should recommend you to suggest something to the contrary to her, when you will see the pale cheek light up, and view her in the position of a true-hearted woman, roused to vindicate the man she loves. A position, let me tell you, not the worst in nature, for *any* woman, whether in hob-nailed shoes or otherwise, to be taken in.

Betsey, the second daughter, was fat—oh, so fat ! She was a perfect ball of pinafore ! And as she was always

tumbling down, and rolling upon the floor, it was perfectly competent for any one to mistake her for a parcel of clothes made up for the wash, and to pick her up by the string that surrounded that part of her body where her waist ought to have been, as a preliminary to throwing her into the corner. She had two very large round eyes, and one very large mouth, which was always open, and her expression was that of a chronic state of amazement.

The family mansion of the Totts was a five-roomed house, situated in one of those stuffy little streets which lie between Lisson Grove and the Edgware Road. They had a lodger, one Mrs. Wheeble, a widow, with a perpetual cold in her head, and deserted by her two sons, who had gone, as she informed the public, into the "Horse Dragoons, and were fighting wild Ingins, *over there*," which, being interpreted, means that they were serving her Majesty in her recently acquired and somewhat troubled province of Hindostan.

It was a neat, matter of fact, *home-like* house the Palazzo Tott. A more comely, happy-looking, thirteen stone of humanity than its mistress you will not find in the neighbourhood. She would have rolled out into about five Totts, but she had reason to believe in a certain old saying about superior goods and small parcels, and entertained the highest respect for her small husband and his smaller heir, to the disparagement of herself and her fat daughter Betsey, who was to her mother as the smallest apple but one in the toy you buy at the fairs is to the external pippin, which contains it and so many others.

The Totts' Christmas had not been an anxious one. It was not much they had to spend in making merry; and as for Mrs. Wheeble, what with her cold in her head and her

two sons, who had helped to support her, having gone into the Horse Dragoons, and being engaged in fighting the wild Ingins "over there," she was no help to them; indeed, it was some time since they had seen their rent, small though it was. It did not seem likely, therefore, that they would have a jollification on New Year's Day.

Now such a person as would tell me that it did not matter what sort of a night it was, would interrupt me here—if he dared—and ask how it was that Tommy was out shopping so late: that will appear in due time. At present I will trouble you to step with me into Mr. Moseley's back office, where, perched upon a high stool, you will find Mr. Tott up to his elbows in figures; for though Saturday is usually a half-holiday, there was plenty to be done in Mr. Moseley's books upon the last working day in the old year.

Mr. Moseley wrote "Accountant" upon his door, for the information of the world generally. What the world wrote upon Moseley for its guidance it boots not me to inquire. He had a house in Belgravia, a shooting-box in Cheshire; he hunted in Leicestershire, fished in Scotland, and made money everywhere.

He was the most affable gentleman in the world, and never above his business, though he drove to his office in as sumptuous an equipage as any from which his titled or untitled clients descended. He received them with so marked a respect and deference that you would never for a moment suppose they had been joking around his table the night before, or that he would sit at theirs the day after. Peers, baronets, bankers, noted merchants, gallant officers, high-born ladies attended on and waited for him in that dusty little room where Tott presided, and came

and went, and came again, and left stamped slips of paper and other things of more immediate use behind them, for Moseley was a fashionable money lender.

No wonder, then, that our Tommy's father was engaged squaring the accounts of the past year, till nearly six o'clock, before the columns came right.

"I remember," said he, addressing the office ruler, which he rolled to and fro upon the palm of his left hand, "when it was three figures—it was many a year before another came and made it four, and now it's five. Thirteen thousand pounds eighteen shillings in one year—the pounds for him, and the shillings for me; well—" Here the ruler dropped upon his tender corn, and put an end to the soliloquy.

"Never mind," said Tom, as he picked it up and locked it up in his desk. "You won't do that to-morrow, my boy."

So saying, he jumped from his perch, locked up the books in the great safe, put on his hat and great coat, turned out the gas, locked the door, and trotted away homewards.

Tom Tott's *great* coat—good! The appearance of Tom Tott trotting home in his great coat is peculiar. Tom wore his great coat in a fashion not yet come into vogue—*i. e.*, with the arms tied round his neck, and the skirts tucked into his waistcoat. This he did for the best of all possible reasons, because it would go on his back in no other way. The buttons had all disappeared long ago, having been transferred to more profitable spheres of action. The coat had belonged to Tott's uncle (old Tobias Tott, the miser, whose money could never be found after his death); and was one of those curious, high-collared,

tight-sleeved, short-waisted creations, which many old gentlemen bring out at their son's and daughter's weddings to show what was the fashion, "When I was a boy, Sir."

Moreover, Tom by some extraordinary contrivance had managed to get stout lately upon his eighteen shillings a week, and his coat had become too tight for him, though all the energy of Mrs. T.'s ample mind had been devoted to causing a corresponding development on the part of the ancient garment.

It was a great deal too large for Tommy, or else it would have passed to that deserving juvenile—but being only a *little* too small for Tom, it was arranged that as soon as Tom became *very large*, and the coat in consequence *very small* for him, or when Tommy should have increased in size to within the reasonable capabilities of the garment in question, it should change owners, and Tommy be promoted to the dignity of coat-tails—a change in his estate to which he looked forward with intense impatience.

This eventful epoch, so anxiously anticipated by our Tommy, was near at hand. The great coat had been anything but accommodating to its wearer. As he trotted home, the wind blew it about in all sorts of directions—untied the arms from around his neck—untucked the skirts from underneath his waistcoat, and sent them flying in his face, so that when he arrived at home he flung it at the head of Tommy, saying "There, my boy, we'll make a man of you; now, cut it up for him, mother. *I've* done with it."

The sudden acquisition of wealth causes sometimes an unpleasant shock to the nerves, and when to this is added a sharp rap between the eyes, the position of Fortune's

favourite is not improved. Tommy having shaken himself free from the folds of the great coat, stood with his hand up to his eye, looking anything but like "a man."

"Why, he's never crying, sure?" said Tott, who had been warming his hands at the fire; "our Tommy crying for a rub over the face," and the fond father was rather disappointed at the reception his gift had met with.

"It ain't a rub over the face," said the injured juvenile, stoutly—indignant at the idea of his manhood being aspersed—"it's the button at the bottom of the skirt's been and given me a black eye."

"Why, there ain't no button on it," replied Betsey. "Mother cut 'em all off to mend father's old draw's—didn't you, mother?"

"Never you mind your father's old draw's," said Mrs. Tott, shortly. "Why, I declare if his eye is not quite swelled up," continued that worthy matron, taking her son in her arms, "and he won't be fit to be seen in church to-morrow—sit still, dear." This admonition was addressed to the ill-used Tommy, against whose injured optic his anxious mother was holding the blade of a huge carving-knife, the point of which was playfully tickling her patient's jugular vein.

But Tommy was not one to "sit still." First, the coat had to be tried on, and admired; and, secondly, the problem of where the button could possibly be, which had escaped being transferred to the drawers, and eluded the search of Mrs. T., had to be solved—failing which the youthful Tott must for ever lie under the imputation of having cried without due cause. Notwithstanding the magnitude of the interest at stake, no trace of a button could be found.

"It was a half-penny in the pocket then," said Tommy resolutely, when the great button point was decided in the negative. The pockets were turned out, but there was no half-penny.

"Then it was *something*," growled Tommy, sulkily, dropping his acquisition on the floor.

Something rattled on the boards!

Tommy dived, and seized the end of one of the skirts, and there, sure enough, the *something* was, enclosed in the hem, round and flat like a button.

Every pair of hands in the room, including those of Mrs. Wheeble—who, notwithstanding her bad cold in her head, and her two sons in the "Horse Dragoons," left her seat by the fire—were busy pinching and feeling Tommy's assailant, and all sorts of opinions were hazarded as to what it could be.

"It's a button," said Mrs. Tott, resuming her occupation of laying the supper.

"It's a dump," said Tommy authoritatively.

"It's a bull's eye," said the fat Betsey, speculating.

"Suppose it's a shilling!" said Mrs. Wheeble, wonderingly.

"Suppose it's a sovereign while you are about it," said Charley Power, who at that moment entered the room.

And a sovereign it was! An old yellow George and the Dragon sovereign, embedded in that semi-manufactured flue, which is only to be found in the hems of old coats and trousers.

A real genuine golden representative of twenty current shillings as ever came out of the Mint.

The pause of wonderment that followed was broken by fat Betsy, who exclaimed, her eyes and mouth still circular

with surprise, "A sovereign! whatever shall we buy with it?"

"Why, I'll tell you what," replied Tott the paternal: "it's a dull Christmas that you have had, wife and children. I honour and love Christmas with all my heart. Christmas time has brought us this piece of good luck, and on Christmas cheer it shall be spent."

"Half of it," interposed Tott the maternal; "think of the rent, Tom."

Tom collapsed slightly. "Well then," said he, "half be it. Ten shillings will go a good way well laid out. We'll keep New Year's Day, children, in style, and have a goose for dinner. Hoorah!"

"Hurrah!"

"And mind," said Mr. Tott, trying to look grave at Margaret, "I'll have no Charley Power to dinner. No, no, *he* never is welcome *here*—is he Meg?"

Meg understood perfectly the irony of her father's speech, blushed crimson, and looked pleased and proud at his evident approval of her choice.

And now my reader knows how it was that Tommy went out marketing so late.

The contents of his voracious basket having been extracted, duly admired, and stowed away, the impracticable family umbrella having been deposited, after many a struggle and fall, in the scullery, where it leaned against the wall in a corner with a look of drunken defiance, the junior members of the Tott family retired to rest. Meg had a great deal to tell mother about something that Charley had said to her that evening; so Mrs. Tott followed her to her room, leaving her patriarch Tott to smoke out his pipe and join her in her own chamber when he had done.

As Tott *père* sat in front of the fire, gazing into the fantastic caverns formed by the burning coals, he fell into a reverie, and his mind was carried back into Mr. Moseley's counting-house. He could shut his eyes and see that last page of the ledger as plainly as though it were still open before him, whilst those four last figures upon which he had moralised as he was leaving off his work assumed grotesque shapes, and danced in and out amongst the red hot coals, eddied about in the smoke of the fire, got into the bowl of his pipe, and whirled about in the smoke, thence ran up the stem and mocked him in the whiffs he sent curling away from his lips, playing with him a demoniacal game of hide-and-seek, defying him to catch them—"Here we are, here we are!" they seemed to say—"thousands of pounds, thousands of pounds—money to spend, money to cheer, money to support old age, money to assuage sickness, money to make others happy—money—money—money. *You* catch us, thousands of pounds for *you!* Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ah!" sighed poor Tott, "if I only had half that money, what a man I would be. There would not be a happier family than this in England. Thousands of pounds for a man who don't work two hours a day, and not as many shillings for me who slave from nine till six. It's a shame, it is. Why should one man be so rich, and another so poor? It ain't natural, it ain't just!" exclaimed he, bitterly. "And then they go and preach at us in church, and say we ought to be contented, and all that, and not covet our neighbour's goods. If Providence did not intend us to covet our neighbour's goods, why don't Providence give us some of our own—we shouldn't covet then. Providence ain't natural, or just either, to such as we. I

never get any luck ; I've been unlucky all my life, and I shall die so. Why, I might have been a rich man," he mused, after a pause, during which he smoked away somewhat more composedly, "if old Uncle Tony had not been so suspicious. Why couldn't he have gone and put his money into the bank, instead of burying it, or hiding it away where no one could find it after his death ? He *was* a close one, to be sure. *He* never trusted Providence. How wild he must have been about losing that sovereign, though. How he must have hunted about the house for it, and all the time he was carrying it about with him in his coat. Ha ! ha ! What a sell for him, if he had ever known it—known it !" And the thought which at that moment crossed Tott's mind caused him to remove his pipe from his lips, and to gaze emphatically into the bowl. "Known it !" repeated he, "suppose, after all, he *did* know it, and put the money in there for the purpose ! By Jove ! there might be more, and we never felt. Where is the coat ?"

It lay close at hand. Tott seized it, and felt it all over eagerly. Nothing hard met his touch, but there was a hickness and rigidity about the collar that he could not make out. Close to the nape of the neck was a small hole. Into this, between the folds of the cloth, he thrust his finger, and something made a crackling sound within. He hooked the "something" towards the hole; and drew it forth.

It was a bank-note !

A sickly tremor seized on poor Tott. Could it be possible that the miser had hid his savings in the old coat ? Tott, in an agony of excitement, tore the seams apart, and shook it violently.

A perfect shower of neatly-folded white papers strewed the floor.

Tott would have cried out, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He staggered, and would have fallen, had he not caught hold of the dresser for support. He knew by the texture and the printing, that all the papers were Bank of England notes; but when, with trembling fingers, he opened one, and saw the value, a mist passed before his eyes—the blood rushed with maddening violence through his brain—and he fainted.

* * * * *

There could be no doubt about it. Although for some time the paternal Tott could not believe his senses, the joint and corroborative testimony of his wife and children, and Mrs. Wheeble (all of whom had rushed down, half undressed, on hearing his fall) put all doubts at rest. Old Tony Tott's secret hoard had been discovered. Mrs. Tott and Margaret collected and spread out the notes, whilst Tommy added them up together.

They represented £1,050!

Then followed a wild burst of joy. Mrs. Tott seized her small husband, and swung him fairly off his legs in the exuberance of her delight; Tommy hurra'ed lustily; and even Mrs. Wheeble for awhile forgot her bad cold in the head, and the undutiful conduct of her sons in the "Horse Dragoons," and snivelled out her congratulations. Meg was the only one present whose joy was chequered with apprehension. She stood apart, pale as death, and trembled violently.

This first shock of surprise and joy over, Mr. Tott began to think seriously about this sudden acquisition of fortune. His old uncle must have remembered that the

money was sewn up in the coat when he gave it to him, and therefore it was honestly his own. What was he to do with it? He was a long-headed little fellow, was Tott, and for many years had watched the character and value of investments, had made large imaginary speculations in stocks and funds, and had realised a large imaginary fortune. At last the time had arrived when he could play a real stake.

Now, there was a project afloat, just about this time, in which he had begged Mr. Moseley to embark, and which seemed to him to be as safe as it was likely to be remunerative, but of which his quondam master would not, or could not, understand the advantages.

In this venture, secretly—that is to say, without informing his wife—he sunk one-half of his capital, and behold! in six months he had doubled it!

The house in Lisson Grove was forthwith evacuated; an elaborate Italian villa near the Regent's Park was hired. Mrs. Tott drove about in her own carriage, and the fat Betsey waddled in silk attire. Mr. Moseley was, of course, obliged to engage a new clerk, and poor Mrs. Wheeble had to go into the workhouse. Tott made her a present of the three pounds twelve shillings and sixpence that she owed him for lodging, and such was the change that the sudden acquisition of money had worked in him, that he persuaded himself that he had done a very liberal thing—he really could not be troubled with old pensioners.

He had realised ten thousand pounds by his fortunate speculation, and before the year was out was admitted a broker on the Stock Exchange, and making his two thousand a-year.

With his new fortunes and home he adopted a new name. Tott was a good enough patronymic for a clerk at eighteen shillings a week ; but for a monied man, rapidly becoming one of the magnates of the City, and aspiring to lay siege to the drawing-rooms of the West-End, it was far too vulgar. An ingenious gentleman connected with the Heralds' College discovered (for a consideration duly paid) that the ancestors of our Tommy's father had come over with the Conqueror, and that their name—enrolled in the archives of Battle Abbey—was formerly spelt "Toté ;" so plain British Tott was Normanised into Toté, and the family assumed the ancient coat of arms, and had the crest—a skylark flying with a castle in its claw—engraved on all the plate.

The richer grew Mr. Toté, the more discontented did he become with the conduct of his eldest daughter. She would not break off with Charley Power. Now Mr. Tott, smoking his Sunday pipe in the little kitchen in Lisson Grove, thought Charley a most agreeable companion, and felt certain that Meg would be a happy woman as his wife ; but Mr. Toté, entertaining his rich City friends in his Italian villa, found no place at his table for poor Charley, and lamented the obstinacy of his child, who, he said, was following a course that could but lead to misery. Charley had risen in the world, and his employers, Messrs. Lott and Bidman, had taken him into partnership. Lott was very old, and Bidman not likely to continue in the business much longer, so that Charley's position was a very good one, and far beyond what Margaret's father, whilst a poor man, had ever hoped that he would hold ; but neither Mr. nor Mrs. Toté could "abide" the

"idear" of *their* daughter marrying a person in trade. So poor Charley Power was forbidden the house, and Meg's pale cheeks grew paler and more sunken each day.

Family troubles did not end here. Tommy had suddenly started up into a man, and, by association with certain fast youths in the City, had become developed into as offensive a little gent as could be found east of Temple Bar. It was old Toté's pride that his son and heir should spend plenty of money, and live like a "gentleman"—*i. e.*, do nothing that was useful, and spend his time and cash in follies more or less vicious. Tommy certainly carried out his father's wishes in this respect most zealously.

In an evil hour (and rather a late one) he formed the acquaintance of a young lady connected with the ballet, a creature of dazzling beauty, as she appeared in "sheen of satin and glimmer of pearls," in burlesque and pantomime. In private life a smooth-haired, high cheek-boned, vixenish-looking damsels in a high black silk dress with a very loose body, caught in very sharp round the waist with a dapper little belt, and round the throat with a very gay ribbon—an angelic being, as beautiful as she was virtuous (according to the infatuated Tommy) at all times. Her parents, who had seen better days—not very distinctly, I am afraid, inasmuch as they were generally in a state of juniper—kept a tripe and trotter shop in the New Cut, close to the theatre where their talented offspring was engaged; but the lowness of her connexions did not damp the fire of Tommy's all-absorbing passion. He proposed in due form—need I add that he was accepted. Shall I attempt to describe the scene, in which, in heroic language, he adjured his mother to sink

worthy prejudices, and to take his bride elect to her bosom from the tripe and trotter shop? I think not. In vain did the authors of his being expostulate and weep, wheedle and swear. Tommy was not to be moved from his purpose. His divinity was a votary of the drama; the drama was a branch of art; art was ennobling and immortal, and the ten years' difference in their ages a trifle not worthy of a moment's consideration, when her merits, and his love, were considered. It was of no use threatening to cut him off with a shilling. Marry his charmer he would, if he were even obliged to hawk her father's tripe and trotters in the New Cut for a subsistence.

Then Mrs. Toté, who had been a slave to her son since his birth, melted, and declared that the boy's nobility of character was such that it was wisest to yield to him. "Let us make the best of a bad job," said she, and receive the girl here, and make a lady of her." But Toté, although the goodness of his heart had oozed away into his money-bags, had not lost all ideas of justice. "How could they," urged he, "give way to Tommy if they resisted Meg? If they admitted Jemima-Anne, the ballet girl, how could they shut their doors against Charley Power?"

Mrs. Toté whereupon waxed angry, told her husband that he was actuated by nothing but stinginess, that he grudged his son an allowance, and spent his money otherwise than on his family. Hasfy and bitter words passed, and these two persons, who had lived together in poverty for twenty years without a quarrel, became estranged, imputed evil motives to one another, and dragged on a wretched, mistrusting life. Poor Toté! he often wished himself back in his four-roomed house. Far from his family being the happiest in England, it was about the

most disjointed and miserable that could be imagined. Even the fat Betsey, who had formerly been good humour and obedience personified, managed to fall out with her brother and sister, set her parents' commands at defiance, and fairly drove the unfortunate lady who had been engaged to act as her governess, out of the house with her violence.

No wonder, in the midst of all this trouble, that Toté's business began to go wrong. When he came home in low spirits from his office a series of new cares met him upon the threshold, which his family (Meg only excepted) took no pains to soften, but rather found delight in nagging at him and each other in his presence, till they nearly drove him demented. Meg was the only one who loved and sympathised with him now; and he saw, with bitter grief, that his good gentle child was passing away.

From being the most frugal, economical woman in the world, Mrs. Toté became recklessly extravagant, and was the dupe of every designing shopman, who told her that it was "the fashion" to have this absurdity or that. She expended a little fortune on China monsters, and gave huge balls, to which she invited a mob of people, who ridiculed her vulgar airs even in her own house, and made a point of cutting her everywhere else. In vain did Toté endeavour to impress upon her the necessity of retrenchment, in the somewhat ticklish condition into which his affairs had fallen. In one short month's time, if all went well, he would be a richer man than ever, but till that time had passed he required for his business every shilling that could be spared. His ambitious spouse, however, was not to be thwarted. It was the height of the London ~~scandal~~ and she fancied that by scattering money right &

in the purchase of carriages, horses, opera boxes, and wondrous habiliments, the gates of fashionable society would be thrown open to her. She therefore launched out more extravagantly than ever. Her tradesmen took fright, sent in their claims all at once, and clamoured for payment. This postponed, Toté's credit in the City was shaken. An ominous whisper, like the lull before thunder, went abroad, and then CRASH came the storm, and down went the house of Toté for ever, burying many another in its ruins.

* * * * *

Carpets hang out of the windows of the Italian villa, and huge bills, announcing the sale by auction of all the furniture and effects of a gentleman "going abroad," are stuck thereon. Odorous gentry, whose dirty hands are covered with glistening rings, and into whose ragged and discoloured shirt fronts diamond pins are thrust, loll about in the gorgeous vulgar drawing-room, spit upon the thick pile carpets, and howl at the auctioneer to knock things down at half their selling value. All Mrs. Toté's curiosities go to the hammer, and fetch as many shillings as they cost her pounds. The furniture, new and well made, realises good prices, and there is some hope that the bankrupt's estate may pay sixpence in the pound when all is sold.

The sale goes on briskly, and everything is now disposed of except the furniture of a little bed-room at the top of the house, which is piled up in the hall. It contrasts strongly with that already sold, being very old-fashioned and mean; but Charley Power, who attends the sale, bids for it eagerly, and it is run up by the brokers till it reaches a price beyond their competition.

This poor furniture is all that remains of the contents of the small house in Lisson Grove, and Charley knows full well that the chamber from which it has been taken is his own true Meggie's room, and that she loves and prizes the old wood; rough-shapen and ugly though it be, in memory of the many happy hours with which it is associated. He little dreams, however, that on a pallet bed, in that same room, poor Maggie, no longer strong enough to sit upright, lies—deserted by all but her broken-hearted father—that these two are only there on sufferance—that they will be turned out on the morrow—and that they have not one shilling left in the world wherewith to buy a meal. They can hear the noise of the auction through the open windows.

"Now then, gentlemen," says the auctioneer, "we come to the last lot—a Pembroke table and a lady's work-box, rather old-fashioned, but curious. What shall I say? Ten shillings—eleven—twelve—thank you—thirteen—going for thirteen!—fifteen."

Meg grasped her father's hand—"That is Charley's voice," she says, adding, "Oh, father, if you had remained poor I should have married Charley, and you would have been happy. We are poorer than ever, now—what good has that money done us?"

"Twenty shillings—one pound is bid—no, sir, twenty-two and six—can't take less than half-a-crown advance—now—twenty-five—going for twenty-five."

"It is Charley bidding, father—it is Charley. Oh, listen, listen! It is for my old work-box, that they took away from here just now. *He* gave it to me—he was so generous, and it is all he will have, poor fellow, to remind him of me when I am gone;" and the dying girl fell

on her pillow, whilst a bright line of blood oozed from her lips.

"Going-going," sounded up from the auction room.

Below, all the bankrupt's worldly possessions had nearly gone—all that loved him, and that he loved, had nearly passed away, above.

In an agony of dread he bent over his child, and adjured her by the most endearing names to rouse. But no voice came.

"Going-going."

"Oh, Meg ! Meg ! dearer to me than all the world. My loving child, speak to me—press my hand—anything to assure me that the dreadful hour has not come. Oh, God ! she's dying."

"Going-going."

"Oh, Meg ! Meg ! Insensate fool that I was to think that sudden untoiled-for wealth would bring us happiness ! Oh, Meg ! live—live for your old father's sake, and we will work for each other, and envy no one. Welcome poverty again, so that it be cheered with life and love."

"Going-going."

"Oh, heavenly Power, whose justice once I doubted, be merciful ! Give me back my child. I bow to thee in humility. I am sorely punished—I will never doubt the wisdom of *thy* dispensations—never mistrust thy overruling Providence. Love thou gavest me, and I knew it not, as *thy greatest* blessing when I had it. Oh, give me back the love of wife and child, and let all else perish !"

"GONE!"

. . . . "And if he has not been and torn up poor

Tommy's coat to bits!" said Mrs. Tott, entering the kitchen in her night-dress, with her candle in her hand, like a domestic Lady Macbeth ; " why, you must have had a nightmare—and no wonder—going to sleep in your chair all night like that, instead of coming up to bed Christian."

* * * * *

My tale is told. The only part of Tott's dream that came true was that which related to Charley Power. The news he had communicated to Meg that afternoon was, that he had been promoted by his employers to the situation of their chief clerk, and that he had now a salary sufficient to marry upon.

In due time he actually *was* made a partner, but not before he and his wife had learned to value the gifts of fortune by working for them. Tott also got a considerable lift in the world, for Mr. Moseleby found it convenient one night to fly to the Continent, leaving his affairs in a state of entanglement, which Tott had the greatest difficulty in unravelling ; but so much skill and patience did he evince in this process, that the principal creditor of his *levanted* employer engaged him at once as book-keeper, at a salary of £2 a week, and gave Tommy a situation as clerk under him. Poor old Mrs. Wheeble declares to this day that all the dream will come true some time, and requests to be sent to the workhouse at once ; but the " Horse Dragoons," in which her sons had enlisted, having returned from India, and they having secured a goodly stock of gold mohurs out of the belts of defunct Pandies in Delhi, which (the money, not the Pandies) they at once handed over to their mother for her support, she

got rid at once of the cold in her head, and considers service in the "Horse Dragoons" the most ennobling pursuit that man can follow.

If any one can tell me where old Tony the miser hid his money, the information shall be forwarded to the Totts without delay.

THE LAST OF THE MISTLETOE.

IT is not generally known, I believe, that a dainty fairy sprite dwells in every spray of the mistletoe, and that when his leafy home is burnt on Candlemas Eve—as it should be, with all the holly and evergreens that have decorated your homes at Christmas—he is released, and flies away, laden with the perfume of the kisses he has breathed, to nourish the germs of the good old plant he loves, and to make them green and hearty for the coming year. But it is true ; true as that I, one of the thousand spirits of the mistletoe, tell it you.

We pass through two stages of existence : the first as a shrub, palpable to your touch and pleasant to your view ; the second as a spirit, invisible as the air, unfelt, unthought of, but present, shedding mirth and happiness around every hearth throughout the length and breadth of “*Merrie England*” where Christmas-time is honoured.

Even in my first stage I could see, hear, and understand all that took place in my immediate vicinity. It was no ordinary event that elevated me to the rank of a spirit capable of looking into hearts and reading thoughts, and much that in my early career was dim and mysterious to me, is now clear as daylight. Thus I am able to tell my

story from the first moment of my life, including what passed beyond my ken during my inferior condition.

It was upon a warm May morning that a sudden pain darted through me, and made me feel that I was a living thing—what I was I knew not, and where located was an equal mystery. I was conscious of nothing, saving a craving desire to expand, so as to meet a something essential to my being, which instinct taught me was beyond my narrow cell. This something was the sunshine. It was, indeed, a joyous day to me when I burst forth, and the glorious daylight flooded over me. I then perceived that I was growing out of a cleft in the bark of a mighty oak, which flourished upon the lawn of a stately mansion, situated (as I now know) in Surrey, about ten miles from London, and called Beckstead Hall. Around the stem of the giant tree was a rustic seat, sought many a time by a fair-haired girl, on which to read over and over again in the summer evenings a bundle of letters that she would draw from her bosom, weep over, kiss, and press to her heart of hearts, which their writer—the gallant young soldier then braving pestilence, treachery, and death amidst the jungles of imperilled India, whose honest love they breathed—had won.

Sometimes her little brothers and sisters gathered round the spot, and filled the air with their merry laughter. The stout old squire, their father, came also not unfrequently to smoke his matitudinal cigar; so that I saw plenty of life. At first, in the innocence of youth, I flattered myself that I was a portion of the favourite old tree, and gave myself airs accordingly. I had grown some four inches when Dr. Brady, my owner Mr. Eglinton's brother-in-law, and a mighty botanist, came on a visit to Beckstead Hall, and then I found out my mistake. "Why, bless my soul!"

exclaimed he one day, springing upon the seat, and poking me about with his eyeglass, "look here, girls! no occasion to buy a mistletoe for Christmas; here's one growing out of the oak."—"Hurrah!" shouted Jack Eglinton, a Harrow boy of sixteen, at home for his summer vacation, "what a jolly lark, Fan! (Fanny was his eldest sister.) Here's a mistletoe; won't I kiss Lotty Claire under it at Christmas!"

Fanny, as an engaged young lady, felt bound to look demure, and to discountenance such a proceeding on the part of her brother, stating that the time had gone by for kissing under the mistletoe. "Gone by," exclaimed old Eglinton heartily, "deuce a bit! I would not give a fig for a young fellow who'd let a pair of pretty lips pass under it without paying toll; and as for the girls, bless 'em! they are their mothers' daughters, and *they* didn't sulk at a stolen kiss, did they, old woman?" This was addressed to smiling, comely Mrs. Eglinton, who blushed like a girl, and told her jolly spouse to "Hush! for shame! before the children."

Time sped on, the summer passed away, and Christmas drew near at hand. I had by this time grown into as fine a plant as you could wish to see—strong and green and bushy, spangled thickly over with snow-white berries. The instant that Jack came home for the holidays he burned to cut me down and hang me in some convenient position within the house, so as to assist in his nefarious design upon our pretty Lotty Claire. "I tell you what it is, Jack," said his father, "if you lay a finger upon it before Christmas Eve, I'll break your head." This was decisive, so I was permitted to grow on.

It would have been better for my peace of mind if Jack

had been allowed to have his own way, for on the night of the 10th of December a gang of thieving costermongers paid a visit to our shrubbery, carried off a whole cartful of holly and evergreens to sell in the London markets, and, as ill-luck would have it, caught sight of me as they were departing with their spoil.

On the third day after my arrival in London, a dashing bright-eyed gentleman drove up in a Hansom cab close to where I was hanging, and purchased me. He had a resolute way about him that struck me from the very first. He never seemed to me to think twice about anything, but did it straight off without hesitation. The quiet way in which he made cabmen, porters (he had carried me away to a railway station), policemen, guards, and even a fellow-passenger or two, do exactly as he wished, amused me greatly. I afterwards knew that, while in India, by force of this same earnest unflinching disposition, he had defended—with a handful of English soldiers, against a swarm of bloodthirsty sepoys—an unfortified ruin, in which some forty or fifty trembling ladies had taken refuge during those fearful months when the fate they least dreaded was death. I also discovered to my delight that he was no other than Captain Leicester Maynard, the affianced husband of pretty gentle Fanny Eglinton, that he had but just returned from Bengal, and that Fanny and all her family were expected to spend Christmas at Craigleigh Grange, the country seat of his father, Sir Robert, the admiral.

I saw little of the Christmas festivities in Craigleigh Grange, for I was hung up in Captain Maynard's bedroom far away from their scene; but when Candlemas Eve approached I began to be aware that something great

was going to happen. I am speaking now from my knowledge as the Spirit of the Mistletoe. Whilst the plant remained undestroyed I knew nothing, guessed nothing, respecting what was at hand.

Candlemas Eve at Craigleigh was Candlemas Eve and something more. It was Fanny Eglinton's birthday; on it she would reach her eighteenth year; and before another summer had passed over her head she was to become the bride of the heir. Open house was to be kept for rich and poor that day, and in the evening a grand ball was to take place—a ball for old and young. The grown-up people were to have the picture-gallery to dance in, and the little folks were to enjoy themselves, unmolested and unrestrained, in the French drawing-room. The eventful day arrived, and visitors descended, like an invading army, not only upon the Grange, but also upon the neighbouring village. The "Maynard Arms" was full to the attics, and everybody who had a lodging to let soon found a tenant in some prudent bachelor who preferred a strange room to a long, cold drive home after the ball. Now did the genius of Sir Robert's buxom housekeeper, Mrs. Cleverley, shine forth in all its brilliancy. Garrets and other inaccessible places became suddenly furnished. Young married men—lucky dogs, whose better halves were their passports to better quarters—crowed over elderly single gentlemen, who were billeted in sky-parlours. The grand staircase looked like a disturbed ant-hill. Servants rushed about in all directions, with portmanteaus, packing-cases, and bonnet-boxes upon their backs. Keys were forgotten or lost, and ladies'-maids, driven wild with excitement, got into each other's way, and quarrelled dreadfully.

The picture-gallery I have mentioned was to

principal ball-room, and a capital one it was. The floor was of polished oak, was hard and bright, and the roof high and vaulted.

From the walls on each side hung grim-looking portraits of departed Maynards, all being dark and gloomy, as cross-grained a looking set as I should wish to avoid. How comes it that ancestors are always such scowling-looking ruffians? There were knights in armour, learned doctors, judges, shepherdesses with crooks and lambs, priests and bishops, small priggish-looking boys and demure little girls, dressed out like grandfathers and grandmothers with their wrinkles boiled out; old swords and pikes, rusty armour full of dents, with, in one or two cases, a small, smooth, round hole, through which a bullet had passed, were hung about here and there; and a ghastly old banner or two flapped moodily up in the roof. Perhaps it is because the swords and pikes are so dusty and rust-eaten, and because the little, smooth hole has warned the old armour that its use has passed away, and its turn come to hang upon the wall for ever, and because the old banners are so torn and cobwebbed, that the ancient knights scowl so upon an age that cares so little for them or their obsolete trappings. Certain it is that they all looked as dark as a thunder-cloud; and when every atom of dust had been carefully expunged from about them, evergreens, holly, and brotherly mistletoe twined in graceful festoons over their heads, and a score of brilliant chandeliers pendent from the roof threatened more light than they had seen for ages, they looked more villainously ill-humoured than ever.

In a few hours all excitement, so far as the arrival of guests was concerned, had subsided. The ladies were

busy superintending the unpacking of ball dresses, and talking about what they were to wear, giving mutual assistance in repairing the results of bad packing, forgets, and other similar disasters. Out of seventeen young ladies two had forgotten their white satin shoes, five had the right dresses but the wrong wreaths, one had forgotten the key (a Bramah) of her dressing-case, in which all her trinkets were bestowed, and another had carefully packed up her younger sister's dresses, &c., similar in hue and fashion to her own, but impracticable around the waist by a couple of inches. Nevertheless, thanks to their own ingenuity, and the contrivances of their maids, together with some assistance from Ada Maynard, they all entered the ball-room that night as if everything had gone *couleur de rose*, trinkets and all, for Jack Eglinton discovered that, though the dressing-case was massively bound with brass, with an unpickable lock, it had underneath the velvet a common deal bottom, which he removed with his pen-knife, thus abstracting its glittering contents, much to the joy of the fair owner. There are plenty of brass-bound, Bramah-locked cases of one sort or another in this world, I have found, with soft deal *under the velvet*.

Night came, and the morose ancestry began to wink in the unaccustomed light of the chandeliers. An orchestra had been raised in the centre of the gallery, into which by means of a ladder the band of her Majesty's regiment stationed at W—— were in the act of climbing, the commissariat under the command of worthy Mrs. Cleverley having just vacated the position.

Now, a ball in the country at Christmas and a London ball are two very distinct things. In the country, people have not been dancing their lives out the night before, and

have no prospect of doing so the night after. They don't come yawning in from somewhere else at two o'clock, or think themselves early at twelve o'clock ; but are invited for nine o'clock, and generally have all arrived by a little after ten o'clock. You anticipate a London ball long before it happens, you enjoy it while it lasts, and you discuss it for a long time after it has passed. Moreover, you have come a long way to it, are determined to enjoy yourself, and you cannot do that without making other people enjoy themselves. Then, it is a general meeting of persons scattered about out of social distance of each other. If you are fond of shooting or hunting, and make yourself tolerably agreeable, you are sure of an invitation somewhere. If you are pretty, and dance well, you are sure to be found out, and have a long list of nice partners—or one or two—or *one* only, if it so please you. If you are good-humoured and merry, you are sure to find good humour and merriment. If you are blessed with unaffected, pleasing daughters, you will be sure to hear them admired. If you are fond of a glass of good wine, a rubber at whist, and a talk over county politics, you are sure to find some one to join you. But if you are grumpy and disagreeable, you had better stay away, for no one will tolerate you.

The old gallery looked splendidly, and seemed to brighten more and more, in spite of the morose ancestry, as one by one the home division began to drop in. There had been a little confusion attending dressing, especially in the fastnesses ; because, when lights were demanded all at once by seventeen young ladies, nine mammas, six papas, and ten other persons, there were not enough candlesticks to supply half the number required. In this emergency, wine-bottles were pressed into the service ; and

if an unwary observer had visited the rooms the following morning, he would have been bewildered at finding how much claret had been discussed by the young ladies, as evidenced by the number of empty bottles to be seen upon their toilet-tables.

However, if they had had Aladdin's palace to dress in, and his Genii to adorn them, they could scarcely have looked prettier or more elegant than they did—some gliding gracefully over the polished floor, others tripping it coquettishly, as if not liking to stand alone for admiration; but one and all wending their way to the far end of the gallery, where Sir Robert had stationed himself, to receive his guests.

Some officers of the —— Regiment, with whom Leicester had been garrisoned in India, were amongst the first arrivals, and then began the ball in earnest. The grim old knights scowled a darker scowl than ever as the fair young girls flew over the polished floor, and the inspiring music and the merry laughter rose up to the roof, shaking the old banners in their faces. More and more arrivals, fresh revellers, poured in at every moment, and soon the old gallery was full—full of welcome, full of merriment, full of hospitality.

It soon became clear that the notion of keeping the denizens of the two ball-rooms separate was impracticable. What! were the grown people to take no part in the forfeits, be shut out from the privilege of dancing with the rising belles, and be forbidden to see the conjuror? Perish the thought! Were the small boys to be denied the inestimable honour of dancing with the largest partners they could find? Was a tall Guardsman to carry off Lotty Claire to waltz with him in the picture-gallery, and Jack

Eglinton not to follow and defy him? Such tyranny would have caused an émeute. No! Old and young mixed freely together, and it is hard to say which enjoyed themselves the most.

After supper, when the jaded musicians had retired to have their innings at the good things, Jack Eglinton dragged the grand piano out of a recess in which it had been stowed away, and Fanny (his sister) and Ada Maynard played a waltz for the impatient juveniles. It was then that my part in the festivities began. Leicester Maynard ran up to his room, seized me by the stem, carried me in triumph into the French drawing-room, and hung me up to the knob of the great chandelier, under which all the merry dancers passed. Bless their pretty eyes, how they brightened! Bless their rosy cheeks, how they blushed! There was Jack—handsome, honest Jack Eglinton—great in the *renvers*, figuring away with Lotty Claire in the centre of the room. He had private mistletoe arrangements of his own, and refrained from joining in the mêlée that followed. Henry Maynard (Leicester's younger brother) seized a sprig of berries from a vase, and gave the signal. Every available scrap of the magic plant was in instant requisition for a dozen of his friends and schoolfellows, and it was soon “turn round,” “join lips,” “up the middle and down again.” Everybody kissed his own partner, and Tom Bright (the “funny boy” of the evening, who wore the Knave of Clubs pinned to the lappel of his coat, in token of his twelfth-cake rank) rushed about, kissing other people's—all but Charley Howard's. Charley was small, and no match for Tom in any less inspiring cause; but he fought like a young lion in defence of pretty Laura Stead-

man, so Tom was baffled. I fancy Laura would have dispensed with his championship, for Tom was a great favourite. Had he not sung a comic song that had put the whole room in a roar? Did he not detect the conjuror in one of his cleverest tricks? Poor, brave little Charley! When, half an hour afterwards, he made formal proposals for the hand of his offended partner upon the strength of his late achievement, he was called a stupid boy, and told to go away! Oh, the ingratitude of woman!

Leicester Maynard went to the pianoforte and chatted with Fanny. Lady Grace—dear, gentle Lady Grace—took baby Maude and danced her under me. What business had she to come brushing my berries with her soft, perfumed curls, when she knew that her lover—Cecil Deighton, of the Guards—*Inkerman* Deighton—was looking on, and that no one would dare to take advantage of her tantalising position? Why did that pudding-headed fellow, Clogger, go about trying to spoil sport, and to take Tom Bright's mistletoe away? I hope he got his shins kicked, and I think he did. But these little drawbacks were as a drop of rain compared with the bright wave of merriment that flooded the place, carrying away all unkindly feelings, all stupid restraint, upon its flow.

The ball had begun early, and so was brought to a conclusion in reasonable time. The last guest departed; the inmates, tired out, sought their beds, all but Leicester Maynard and his friend Deighton, who adjourned to the room of the former to smoke their cigars. The morose ancestry scowled unseen in the deserted gallery, and the hospitable old house was still.

Neither Maynard nor Deighton had the remotest idea of going to bed; they had so much to talk and think about.

"I say, old fellow," said Deighton, after they had sat for some time puffing away in silence, "what o'clock is it?"

"Only half-past four."

"How light the mornings are getting! Is that the sun or the moon shining through the chinks in the shutter?"

"Never mind the sun or the moon. How about your own particular star? What have you and Lady Grace been talking about all night? Is it settled at last, eh?"

"Don't chaff."

"No—but is it?"

"Well, she says so."

"By Jove! I wish you joy," cried Leicester, wringing his friend's hand. "You're the luckiest fellow in the world—next to me."

"I wonder what she is doing now?" said Deighton gravely, gazing into the fire.

"Repeating all your absurd speeches to Fanny, I'll be bound."

"Do they occupy the same room then?" Deighton inquired.

"Yes; we are all packed as close as herrings in a cask to-night. They sleep in the west wing, right opposite our window."

"That light gets stronger and stronger," said the Guardsman, after a pause. "The sun must have risen. I'll open the shutters and see."

"Well, do if you like," Leicester replied, with a yawn.

Deighton unfastened the bar and threw the shutters apart. As he did so a red, lurid glare flashed into the

room, and uttering a cry of anguish, he sprang back and seized his friend by the arm.

The west wing was in one sheet of flame !

The alarm had already been given, and the friends saw by the blaze of the conflagration scores of labourers and servants hurrying from all directions to the scene of the fire. Leicester rushed from the room, followed by Deighton. They tore down the dark stairs, shouting "Fire ! fire !" as they passed on towards the west wing. Deighton could but follow his friend, knowing nothing himself of the intricate corridors and passages that led to that portion of the old house, and when, on dashing open one of the doors, a hot cloud of smoke burst forth in their faces, he lost sight of him for a moment, took a wrong turning, and found himself in the entrance hall, amidst a crowd of terror-stricken men and fainting women.

Fearful must it have been to those young girls--sleeping calmly and happily after the fatigues of their night's enjoyment, perchance dreaming over again some word or look earnest enough to have written itself upon their memories--fearful, indeed to have their peaceful slumbers dispelled by the terrible cry of "Fire ! fire !" No one knew how near it might be. Fire around her, and she in a strange room, the way to escape from which was unknown to her, or in her fear forgotten. Fire ! and in her haste to fly she might unwittingly rush into the midst of the blaze ! Fire ! which, when safe herself from danger, was threatening those dear to her, who were still unrescued from the flaming building. . . . "Fire ! fire ! fire !" Mothers wildly seeking their children ; children who could hardly be restrained from rushing into the flames to seek their parents. Of this dreadful scene Leicester Maynard saw but little, for

he was thundering at the massive oaken portal that separated Fanny's apartment from the rest of the west wing. He dashed himself with all his force against the locked door : it was immovable ! He shouted until his voice failed : no answer ! He burst into a room where his father's lathe and carpentering tools were kept, and, seizing a broad axe, threw once more upon the old door, and, between the blows himself that he rained thick and fast upon it, shouted, "Awake, Fanny ! Lady Grace, awake ! Fire ! fire ! It is I, Leicester, who calls ; unlock the door. Fire ! There was no answer ; but the oak began to yield under the axe. One good blow, and the lock would part from the panel. It was given.

The head of the axe flew off !

With his bare hands Leicester tore away the splintered wood, and the heavy door, wrenching off the hinges in its fall, dropped with a loud crash into the passage.

The great rush of air caused by the falling mass drove back for a moment the flames and smoke from the staircase beyond ; but he had hardly sprang halfway up when they closed behind him, roaring more furiously than ever.

It was then that Leicester heard Deighton's voice calling, in a wild, choked voice, upon Grace to rouse herself and fly to him. Poor fellow, he knew not where to find her. Leicester shouted in return ; told him that to follow was impossible, as the staircase was already tottering.

"Ladders and ropes to the window ! quick, Deighton ! See to it yourself ; it is our only chance of saving them. Leave me here ; I will do all that can be done."

* * * * *

When Lady Grace and Fanny had at last retired to their room they felt as little inclined for sleep as their

lovers. Young ladies have generally quite enough to talk about after any ball to last till next morning. They chatted on, and never guessed how time had passed till a dull heavy knocking startled them. They opened their door, and a sight burst upon their gaze well calculated to strike terror into bolder hearts than theirs. The passage was filled with smoke and flames, whilst the fearful cry of "Fire!" resounded throughout the house.

Bold and prompt in any emergency, as soon as she had in some degree calmed the fears of her more timid companion, Fanny ran to the head of the flaming staircase and cried for help. Help was nearer than she had hoped, for the next moment Leicester, emerging from the smoke, stood by her side.

Fanny was pale as death and wonderfully calm. "I had so hoped and prayed that you were safe," she murmured in her lover's ear, as she paused for a moment in her endeavours to restore Grace to consciousness; "and you are here."

"To save you, darling!"

"Ah! I fear it is to perish with me."

"Better so than to live without you. But we are losing precious moments. For the love of life, Lady Grace, don't faint again! For God's sake, rouse yourself!" he cried in his wild agony.

"Hush!" said Fanny, "you are too impetuous. Dear Grace," she whispered, gently, in her friend's ear, "we are all in great danger. We depend upon each other for safety, under God. We must all be saved, or all—but, please God, we may all be saved. Be a brave girl, darling, for Cecil Deighton's sake."

It was enough. Fanny, with womanly tact, had touched

the right chord. There was warrior blood in the gentle patrician's veins, which the name of her lover set in a glow ; and the cowering weeping girl of a moment before sprang to her feet, dashed the tears from her eyes, and was ready for anything.

Leicester then led the two girls into their room, and, closing the door against smoke and flame, threw up the window, sprang upon the outside sill, and shouted to the crowd below to hasten the movements of those who had gone in search of ropes and ladders.

“ They are coming ! they are coming ! ” he cried, in a tone of exultation, as though he were watching some vigorously-contested race. “ Deighton is with them. They have a ladder strong enough to save fifty of us. They are here ! — hurrah ! — they are here ! ” and Leicester almost screamed with joy and excitement. On they came. Let the flames roar, and the old house crumble beneath their fiery tongues. What matter ? — his darling would be safe. Oh, the wild joy of giving her scathless to her old father’s arms !

Up rose the heavy ladder, foot by foot ; but, oh, how slowly did it seem to rise, though strong arms and willing hearts were strained to the utmost ! Up it rose, till it stood trembling on end in the air. Leicester could hear his own heart beating as the top was lowered slowly towards the window. *It was full twenty feet too short !*

A low moan rose up from the crowd collected below. Men looked into each other’s faces, and spoke not. There was a deep silence, broken only by the roaring of the flames and the crashing of falling timbers.

What were Leicester’s emotions now ? The roaring of the flames became more and more loud ; the room grew

suffocatingly hot, whilst smoke began to creep under the door, and to curl about Fanny and Grace (who were kneeling in earnest prayer) as though it were a dim shroud enfolding them.

Then it was—when all seemed lost—that the remembrance of a boyish piece of folly flashed across Leicester's throbbing brain. The window in which he stood was the very last on the third story of the west wing. Within four yards of it were the capitals of three Corinthian pillars. One of these was on the south side, the other on the west front, and the third, slightly in advance of the others, masked the angle of the two main walls. Beyond these on the south side, was a ledge, similar to that on the west, near to which was a massive waterspout. Below was a terrace, raised some twenty feet from the ground. Now, the ladder, though far too short to reach the window from the lawn, if placed upon this terrace would come up to a level with the window on the other face of the house, so that if he could but pass his dear one and Grace round the capitals of the columns to the ledge beyond, they would be saved. His mind was made up in a moment. To remain was certain death, for the fire was crackling at the door.

"Do not attempt it! do not attempt it!" cried Deighton, as Leicester shouted to him to place the ladder on the terrace. "*You* could not pass round, and how can they?"

"I have done so for a swallow's nest," cried Leicester, eagerly. "Do as I ask you, man! it is our only chance."

"It is indeed!" cried a voice from the crowd. "God help them! it is indeed!"

Leicester looked down, and saw that the speaker was his father.

There was no difficulty in making the courageous girls understand the plan. The only question that arose between them was who should first brave the danger. This Leicester soon decided. Fanny was calmly courageous—Grace unnaturally daring. Upon the bravery of the one he could depend as sure and lasting ; he knew not at what moment that of the other might be quelled by the imminent danger. If Fanny passed in safety, he would have no fear for Grace. With one hand firmly clasping her little waist, and the other holding on by the corner of the parapet above his head, with their faces to the wall, Leicester and his plighted bride passed inch by inch along the narrow ledge till they gained the capitals of the pillars. Here there was a broader footing, and Leicester paused. “Rest awhile, darling,” he whispered ; “we are half round, but the worst half is to come. Five minutes more, and, please God ! we shall be safe.”

“It would be so sweet,” murmured Fanny in response, as he strained her close to his heart, “to be saved by you ; but, oh ! I fear ! I fear !”

“Fear nothing, my own. Recollect Grace has to follow. Are you ready ?”

“Quite—quite ready.”

Still holding her firmly with one arm, while both of hers, widely extended, embraced the acanthus mouldings, they shuffled—I know of no other word—round the narrow ridge, rendered doubly slippery by half-melted snow, dislodging the portions of moss and rubbish that had accumulated there, and which fell at every step they took, making it appear to the breathless spectators as if the narrow path were crumbling beneath their feet. It was a fearful moment, every movement had life and death in it,

every inch brought them nearer to the one or the other. The nerve and trust of the fair girl did not fail her, and, moving along slowly and surely, as the first part of their transit had been passed, they doubled the angle, and gained the terrace front.

Here Leicester had anticipated that all difficulty would have ended; but no. As Deighton stood on the top round of the ladder, his head was not quite on a level with Fanny's waist, as she stood in the recess I have mentioned. The ladder was still several feet too short. "Lower her down into my arms, and I will carry her," said Deighton, who was scarcely to be recognised but for his voice. His hair was singed, there was a red burn upon his forehead, and his face was ghastly pale. Leicester trembled for Grace's senses when she should see him. "No, that will not do, you cannot balance the weight as you are; go down a few steps, and guide her feet, as I let her down."

"Now, my darling," said Leicester, "kneel with me; do not be afraid; I have firm hold of you. Now try if you can find the top step of the ladder with one foot; Deighton will guide it—so—there! Now can you put down the other and stand up? Cling to me, never fear; that's brave and well; now try the next step; can you reach it?"

"Not as you are holding me," she said.

He shifted his hold from her waist to her arms. She then gained the third step, and he only held her wrist. Clinging to the water-spout, he leant over the ledge till Fanny had descended far enough to be able to grasp the side of the ladder with her disengaged hand.

"Now, darling, you must release my hold ; go down slowly and steadily."

She gently returned his parting pressure, and, with a look of ineffable tenderness, murmured something so softly that he could not catch the sound, but, from the motion of her lips, he formed it into a blessing. Descending slowly, preceded by Cecil Deighton, she looked up all the while, with the same sweet expression on her lips.

She reached the ground in safety, was caught to her old father's heart, and a great shout of joy arose, but was instantly hushed when it was seen that Lady Grace had begun the perilous route so fortunately traversed by her friend. Grace had heard all the directions given by Leicester to Fanny, and acted upon them promptly and silently, but her dress, which was much lighter than Fanny's, clung and got caught in the masonry, so that Leicester had to leave her clinging to the wall unsupported for several moments whilst he disentangled it. They reached the recess, however, in safety, but Grace had not strength left to stand upon the ladder.

"Shut your eyes, Lady Grace," Leicester said, in as gay a tone as he could assume ; "shut your eyes ; trust to Cecil."

Kneeling as before, holding by the old spout, he lowered the now inanimate form till Deighton could fairly clutch his beloved burden without fear of losing his balance. He then rapidly descended the ladder, and Leicester knew from the shout which then arose that they had reached the ground in safety.

Maynard now determined on returning to Fanny's room, and, if the flames had not filled it, to save for her and

Lady Grace as many of their little treasures as he could. There was a miniature of the mother of the latter, set in a bracelet, that he had noticed upon her arm at the ball, and which he determined to save at all events. The flames had not yet penetrated into the room, but the paint of the door was blistered, and the door itself so hot that he could not bear his hand upon it.

He soon found the miniature and Fanny's trinket-case, containing some valuable, old, family jewels. These he wrapped round in a blanket, and flung out of the window. He then pocketed everything of value that he could lay his hands upon, indiscriminately, and, taking a burst of flame through the floor as a hint to retire, swung himself round the pillars, and soon had his foot on the ladder.

Leicester had heard a great deal of shouting, but as that had been going on all the time, except when Fanny and Grace were in danger, he took no notice of it; when, however, he had turned the corner, he perceived, to his dismay, that he had too rashly disregarded the warning cries, for a volume of smoke and flame was pouring from a window directly below him, threatening destruction to the ladder, his only hope of safety. There was nothing to be done but to make a dash for it. He did so; sliding, as he had often done when a boy, astride upon the ladder. It was too late. He felt a flash across his eyes, a heavy blow, and then—nothing!

Then followed a great roar and crash. A myriad of bright sparks shot into the air, and all knew that the roof had fallen in. The flames, which for a moment were smothered beneath the falling rafters, broke forth again with redoubled fury, and amongst them I, the Spirit of the

Mistletoe, released by the burning upon Candlemas Eve of my leafy prison, soared aloft into the grey morning sky.

But I did not desert those whose story I have so far told. By almost superhuman exertions the fire was confined to the west wing, in which it had originated, and the rest of the old house was saved. No one was lost; but for many a weary day Leicester Maynard flickered between life and death. When at last he had recovered from the severe internal injury caused by his fearful fall, he still lay in silence and darkness, and only knew by a warm drop that sometimes fell on his brow that one he loved was watching over him. His sight was gone! He had been blinded by the flames through the midst of which he had fallen.

One day, when Leicester had awakened from a sleep, he pressed the little hand that seldom left his grasp, and said, "Guess what I have been dreaming of, dearie. I fancied," continued he, not waiting for a reply, "that I was watching the rebuilding of the west wing that you have been telling me about, and wondering whether the room we used to call yours will be where it was before."

"Not exactly, Sir Robert says; but it will be finished exactly in the same manner, so that you will scarcely see any difference."

"I shall not indeed *see* any difference," replied poor Leicester, somewhat sadly.

"You must not think or speak so mournfully. You have been very patient, dearest, hitherto; be patient a little longer."

"There have been very many 'little longers,' Fanny, but they have not brought what has been promised. No,

dear one," he said, "sight has gone for ever, and I shall never see your dear face again, save in dreams."

"Listen," whispered she. "As you *will* look upon the gloomy side of things, I will humour you, and take the same view. With all this sorrow, however, have we not much to be thankful for? It is almost a miracle that you were not killed upon the spot where you fell. Of what value do you think my life would have been to me with the constant remembrance that *yours* had been lost in preserving it? If it should be the will of God that human skill should fail in averting this calamity from you, have you not one to share your sorrow, whose life will be devoted to comforting you, to minister to your every wish? One whose eyes shall see for you faithfully and truly? One whose very being belongs to you? Will not my love abate *some* part, at least, of the misfortunes you dread?"

Leicester told her that it could not be; that the sacrifice was far too great; that he had thought of this, and dreaded the time when it must come forth; that he must bear his calamity *alone*!

"You know not what you are doing," replied Fanny, vehemently, "Sacrifice!" and her tone changed almost to bitterness. "Is the exercise of a love which the everyday monotony of a cold world chains down fruitless in one's heart a sacrifice? Oh! Leicester, when you cease to love me, speak those words again. Sacrifice! would you—oh! but hush! How wrong I have been, how thoughtless, how selfish! Hush! you must, indeed, not speak again. I have been sadly imprudent. You must be calm. If you attempt to speak, I will go. You must obey *me* now."

Days and nights were alike to the blind man ; but I think it was about every fourth day that a strange step entered his room, and a strange hand removed the bandages, and examined his eyes. The lids were so swollen and blistered by the flames, which had burst forth full in his face, that they had remained closed. On one of those days Leicester felt the lid gently raised, and the great oculist, after a close scrutiny and a lengthened pause, whispered in Fanny's ear, "I wish you joy, young lady ; his eyes are safe."

They *are* perfectly safe. I, the Spirit of the Mistletoe, knew it all along. Leicester Maynard may have arrived at the dignity of spectacles a little before his time, and his handsome face have one more honourable scar upon it ; but what of that ?

The Lady Grace and Cecil Deighton, Fanny Eglinton and Leicester Maynard, were married on the same day.

Time flies apace, and many other spirits besides myself hover over Sir Robert Maynard's hospitable hearth. It is Candlemas Eve again, and one more sprite is added to our number, for a fire has been lighted in the huge, old-fashioned fire-place, and the holly and the evergreens are consumed therein, amidst a hearty cheer for the Christmas that has passed. Four children crowd round Sir Robert's knee, making him repeat, for the hundred and first time, the story I have just told you.

It will not please the children unless the old man tells it *properly*—that is to say, does not alter one word or tittle of the original account. Should he do so, he will be instantly corrected, and sent back again to where he had introduced the innovation.

When the story is quite finished, the little girl (very

like Fanny Eglinton that was) who has been standing quietly between grandpapa's knees, turned her great eyes full upon his face—

“ Grandpa !”

“ Well, my pet ?”

“ Why did not Colonel Deighton run up to save godmamma when papa went to save mamma ?”

“ Because he lost his way ; and a stupid servant told him that godmamma was safe in the hall, my darling.”

“ But,” said a handsome boy, with a proud toss of his head, “ if my papa had been there, I should like to know who would have got her down the ladder.”

“ So should I.”

THE PICTURE IN THREE PANELS.

PART I.

HOW STEPHEN ARMITAGE WENT TO KEYSHAM CASTLE, AND WHAT HE SAW THERE.

THERE are few men whose paths through life have been so smooth, and so often interlaced, as those along which Stephen Armitage journeyed side by side with his friend Harry Le Bourbel. As boys they had been schoolfellows, and their friendship (like all boys' friendships that are worth anything) began in the pause that supervened after they had fought and rivalled each other, till they both became well nigh exhausted with the equal contest. Then it occurred to them both, almost at the same moment, that it would be far more compatible with their present comfort and future happiness, to be friends instead of foes—a very wise conclusion, to which they acted up throughout their long and eventful lives.

'It was in the year 17—, one of the severest seasons ever known—that Stephen Armitage first became an inmate of Keysham Castle, the noble country seat of the Le Bourbels. He was at that time reading hard for his degree—shut up with his books in the deserted cloisters of his Alma Mater—when he received an invitation that could brook no denial

to spend his Christmas at Keysham. Travelling in those days, I can tell you, was quite another thing from what it is at present. There were none of your railways making the face of the country look, in maps, like an eccentric grid-iron, ready to burn the fingers of any unwary individuals who are silly enough to meddle with their shares. There were no express trains to whisk you away from one end of the country to the other between your ordinary meal times. No ; those were the good old sleepy coaching days, when no one travelled that could possibly avoid doing so—when a man made his will as a necessrry preliminary before he journeyed a hundred miles, and fathers of families slept at Brighton, to break the fatigue of going *all the way* from London to Brighton in one day.

Well, I have said that the winter of 17— was one of the severest ever encountered in this country. If Stephen Armitage had any doubt about the superior intensity of the cold, that doubt was entirely dissipated long before he came to the end of his six hours' drive from Oxford to Mapleton—the nearest stage at which the coach changed horses to Keysham Castle. The distance was trifling, but the roads were so choked up with snow, that in many places the horses could not proceed at more than a foot's pace. Then, as a matter of course in those days, he had as fellow passengers the angry old gentleman who would have the window open, and the testy old lady who would have it shut ; and whenever there was a temporary cessation of hostilities between this interesting pair, the coach would stop, and the guard appearing at the window, with icicles hanging from his whiskers, would present himself at the door and ask, “if the gentlemen *would* be so kind as to get down and walk up the hill, to ease the horses, as

the roads was so *very* heavy?"—a promenade which, considering that the snow was everywhere ankle deep, and at some places lay in drifts more than a yard thick, was by no means a pleasant one. Then, when the unfortunate *voyageurs* had toiled up to the top of the hill, and had taken their seats in the coach again, with the sensation that they had not any of their fingers or toes worth speaking about, they would find that the testy old lady had taken advantage of the enemy's absence to put up the windows, and the "Sir, I'm not going to be frozen to death to please you!" and the "D——e Ma'am, d'ye want to smother me?" began again, till another hill sent the rougher sex to wade, wet and miserable, through the deep snow again, and so separated the belligerents.

After having endured all this, you may be sure that Armitage was not sorry to reach his destination; and the hearty welcome of his friend, cordially joined in by all his family, and the blazing fires and good cheer of Keysham Castle, soon made him forget the hardships he had encountered during the day.

The evening passed most pleasantly. They had playing, and singing, and dancing, romping with the children, blind-man's-buff, and forfeits; till, heartily tired with laughing and exercise, and thoroughly friendly and contented with each other, the guests wished their hosts "good night, and a happy Christmas!" (for it was Christmas Eve and midnight) and then retired to rest. Armitage and his friend had much to talk about before they followed their example. They adjourned by mutual consent to the cosy sanctum of the latter, and sat over the fire, smoking their cigars, and chattering over old school-days—of Jack *this*, and Charley *that*, and what had become of Tom *some-*

thing else; comparing notes about C——, who was thought to be a dunce, and could never get beyond the fourth form, but who was now a popular author; whilst S——, upon whom they had all looked as a second admirable Crichton, had subsided into an Evangelical curate of opaque ideas; till the time flew away so pleasantly that when at last Armitage threw away the stump of his third cigar and looked at this watch, he found that it was past three o'clock. Refusing Le Bourbel's proffered escort back to the room allotted to him, he lighted his lamp and wished him good night. "You cannot miss your way," Harry called out after him; "Turn to the right when you come to the gallery, and the last door to the left is the Bachelor's room, where you sleep."

The great house was silent as the grave, as Stephen Armitage wended his way through its long corridors towards his apartments. The lamp he carried being only newly lighted, did not burn as brightly as it ought, so that he had some difficulty in finding his way to the picture gallery which led to his room. At last, pushing open a swinging door, he found himself in the centre of it, and the lamp, fanned by the closing door, sprang up and revealed portraits of grim warriors and fair dames, ancestors and connections of the Le Bourbel's, which, set in massive black oaken frames, lined each wall from floor to ceiling. It had a gloomy look, that ancient picture-gallery in the stillness of that cold winter night; and as Armitage passed along it, and the rays of his lamp flickered on the faces of the old pictures, it seemed to him as though they frowned upon him for disturbing their meditations. Then it was that the remembrance of some family legends told him long ago by his friend, of dark deeds p-

by the original of one of those portraits (which one he knew not), of the evil light that the artist had thrown into its eyes, and of the effect produced by it on the mind of more than one visitor at the Castle, who had contemplated it too deeply. He had smiled at such tales when they were told him, and wished for an opportunity of daring the gaze of grim Sir Claude; but *now* he felt inclined to shut his eyes and quicken his pace, and was by no means sorry when he gained the last door on the left. There were two steps between it and the floor of the gallery, leading downwards—a fact that he had not previously noticed—so that, still thinking of Sir Claude, and longing to be by his own fire-side, he mechanically turned the end of the gallery, and stumbled down the steps into the room. As he fell, bursting open the door, the lamp fell broken from his hand, and, saving the light of the clear winter moon that streamed through the casement, he was in darkness.

As he had entered by the last door on the left, he knew that it ought to be his room, and though a little startled, and hot after his false step, he was perfectly collected; but when, turning round to where he remembered that the fire-place was situated, he encountered what appeared to be a man in armour; and on looking towards the bed, he saw, instead of the little white cot of the bachelor's room, a stately couch, draped with hangings of crimson and gold, his heart began to beat loudly, and a sickly sensation stole over him, which for a moment prevented him from moving away. This past, his first impulse was to beat a hasty retreat, fearing that he had invaded the domain of some fellow-visitor; but a second glance at the bed showed that it was unoccupied; and, indeed, the damp odour

which filled the apartment negatived the idea that it was inhabited.

The night was beautifully clear, and as his eyes became accustomed to the half light, and his sudden start had worn off a little, he began to look around him and found that he was in a spacious chamber, which, but for the presence of the bed, he would have taken to be an armoury, for the time-worn tapestry was thickly dotted with swords, and spears, and suits of old mail ; whilst several banners, ragged and moth-eaten, waved to and fro, mournfully, in the vaulted roof, amongst the sombre rafters of which, high above the top of the window, the darkness seemed to hang like a cloud. The air was bitterly cold ; so, after casting a hasty glance around, he proceeded to search for his lamp, which, at last, he discovered, after groping for some time in the dark ; for the moonbeams, streaming through the narrow casement in a slanting direction, lighted only the floor and wall at the side opposite to that at which he had entered. As he rose from his stooping posture, his shoulder encountered some hard substance, which with a clatter and a crash fell to the ground. Again he felt his heart leap into his mouth ; and although an instant before he was shivering with cold, the perspiration broke out and stood in heavy drops upon his forehead, and losing head entirely he rushed towards the door ; but, search where he would, on all sides of the room, *he could not find it.*

At this moment a cloud passed over the face of the moon, and he was left in utter darkness. Stephen Armitage was a brave man, having a healthy common-sense mind not easily to be worked upon by superstitious fears ; but telling his own story in after years, when I became

acquainted with him, he has acknowledged that at this juncture he was *honestly and completely scared*.

I shall now continue to describe his adventure in his own words, as nearly as I can remember them, with the assistance of some memoranda I jotted down during the narration.

"Well!" he said, "as I had no fancy for remaining there all night, I redoubled my search for the door by which I had entered, and as I felt along the walls my hand encountered a heavy curtain or drapery, drawing which aside, the moonbeams, which at that moment streamed down again, fell full upon a large picture, whilst on the floor at my feet they gleamed upon a broken sword, a knight's pennon, and a coat of mail, the fall of which had so startled me. Upon examining the breastplate I found that it had been pierced by a lance thrust; and upon further search, I found a rusty spear-head, broken short off from the staff, which evidently formed part of some old trophy with the armour it had penetrated. The light which now filled the room disclosed to me the door, and I was turning to try and find my way back to my own territory, when my eye fell upon the picture. I saw at a glance that it must relate to the armour and broken spear that had been placed upon a pedestal beneath it.

"It was a PICTURE IN THREE PANELS, or rather three pictures enclosed in one frame, the largest of which—that in the centre—represented battle. The principal figures were two knights engaged in a desperate contest for a pennon, held by the one and contended for by the other. He to whom the flag belonged—judging from the fact that the arms emblazoned upon it were similar to those on his surcoat—was on horse-back and armed *cap-à-pie*. The charger of his adversary lay rolling in the agonies of death,

and such was the spirit which the artist had infused into the scene, that you could see that the dismounted warrior had sprung from the body of his steed upon the standard of his foeman, to which he clung, resting his knee on the side of his war-horse, whilst with his free hand he shortened his sword, and was in the act of thrusting it through a joint in his enemy's armour. But the chances of war were not all in favour of the dismounted knight. His cuirass had been pierced by a spear, blood was fast welling from the wound, and the heavy mace of his foeman was about to descend with irresistible force upon his casque. In the background a troop of men-at-arms appeared dashing forward threatening to overwhelm friend and foe in their charge. The vizors of the principal combatants' helmets were down, so that their faces were not revealed.

"In the panel to the right was a less comprehensible scene. Upon the floor of a loathsome dungeon lay a youth apparently dying of his wounds. A noble-looking lady, pale and haggard, but with the fire of a race of heroes illuminating her brow, knelt upon the blood-stained stones beside him, supporting his head, and guiding his trembling hand as he placed a marriage ring upon the finger of a young girl, whose features, although convulsed with grief, evinced traces of surpassing loveliness. Over this group, in an attitude of deep devotion, bent a reverend old man, down whose furrowed cheeks bitter tears had been coursing, but now a clear light of resignation beamed from his kindly eyes. In a remote corner of the dungeon were *a broken sword, a banner, and a pierced coat of mail*.

"In the panel to the left of the centre picture the same noble lady appeared, her proud countenance not with grief as before, but flashing with fierce anger.

never forget the expression of her features, the commanding dignity of her posture. One hand, clenched so tightly that you could tell that the nails were piercing the flesh within, was held on high as though invoking vengeance ; the other rested upon a massive Bible which lay upon the table beside her, and although she appeared to be pouring forth a wild torrent of invective, there was depicted that quivering of the lip, that fixing of the eye, which betrayed the grief, the deep poignant agony, the sorrow that dries up the tear and scorches the throbbing brain, was tearing her very soul within her.

“ Eagerly bending forward and drinking in her words, as though his fate for joy or sorrow depended upon them, was a youth, in whose open, manly features I did not, at first, recognise those of the dying prisoner in the right-hand panel ; but they were clearly one and the same person. In the foreground, terrified and crouching with an expression in which joy seemed struggling with sorrow, appeared the bride of the dungeon scene. Before the table close to the Bible was an open casket, from which some rich jewels hung ; others lay crushed under the stately lady’s feet, and scattered around her upon the floor. A trooper, travel-stained and weary, who had evidently brought some message or news, leaned against the portal, and never have I seen meanness and duplicity stamped so clearly upon the lineaments of a human being, as they were stamped by the artist of this remarkable painting upon that trooper’s face.

“ Perhaps it was the associations of that ancient chamber, and the presence of the arms and the banner *mentioned*, as it were, twice in the story of the picture in three panels that filled it so full of interest, that, forgetful

of the late hour, and my hurry of a few minutes ago to get back to my own chamber, I stood gazing till I could hardly remove my eyes from the canvass, so completely had the subject fascinated me.

"What could it mean? Was it a vow or a curse uttered by the stately lady in the left-hand panel, and why should the young noble—for noble is written in every line of his form and features—be so eager to listen? Was it *caused* by the death of one or other of the combatants in the centre panel, or was that the completion of the vengeance she demanded? Then, that strange union of the living and the dying! What could that mean? How came the flag of the battle-field in the dungeon? How can the youth of the one picture be the dying prisoner in the other, if he be also the knight of the standard, whose death or bravery has brought down the curse to which, in the panel to the right, he is represented as listening? *Which* of the warriors is he—he who is defending the banner, or he who is struggling to capture it? Is he either? If not, how came the banner in his dungeon? The scene to the right must have taken place *after* that depicted on the left; but which of them was the sequel to the battle?

"And so I pondered and pondered, and wondered and wondered, puzzling my brain till I made confusion worse confounded, and the cold, and the chime of four o'clock warned me that, if I was to find my way back to the Bachelor's room at all, I had better set about doing so. So, giving one farewell glance at the picture that had so interested me, I left that strange room, and retracing my way to where I had entered the gallery, hoped, by starting afresh and paying more attention to the instructions received from Le Bourbel, I should discover my proper resting-place.

“ ‘Turn to the right when you enter the gallery, and the last door to the left is the Bachelor’s room, where you sleep.’ Those were his very words. I had turned to the right when I entered the gallery, and I did go to the last door on the left, and it was *not* the Bachelor’s room! Was it all a practical joke of Harry’s, or —. And there it was that it flashed upon me what a blockhead I had been; why, it was as clear as possible! He stood facing me as he told me the route—consequently his *right* would be my *left*; so that I had gone diametrically opposite to his instructions, and taken the wrong end and side of the gallery! Profiting by past experience, I opened the last door to my right with considerable caution, not being quite sure that I was not about to encounter some fresh adventure, I recognised to my great satisfaction, by the light of the fire (which had not yet gone out), my own portmanteau and gun-case and the comfortable furniture of the ‘Bachelor’s room.’ ”

Such was the account of this adventure with the PICTURE IN THREE PANELS, given to me by its hero. He further stated, that, having restored the circulation in his benumbed limbs, he resolved that, the first thing in the morning, he would seek an explanation of that extraordinary painting, and, until that were given, would think no more about it. But he resolved in vain. It would haunt him, sleeping or waking; only in his dreams he could not keep the testy old lady of the coach out of it. At one time she was invoking vengeance upon the angry old gentleman for not shutting the window; at another, waging a deadly combat with him; and eventually, after having put him into prison for the damages in an action for breach of promise of marriage, relented and wedded him to Harry Le

Bourbel's bright-eyed sister, with the dimpled shoulders, who had sat next to Armitage, the dreamer, at blind-man's-buff.

You may be sure that he was well quizzed at breakfast when he told his tale, especially by the bright-eyed sister aforesaid, who, being well stored with the legendary lore appertaining to her family, took him up that evening when twilight set in to the chamber of the tapestry and armour, to have another good view of the place ; and then, ensconced by the cheerful drawing-room fire, told him the story of the PICTURE IN THREE PANELS, which, dear reader, she shall tell you.

PART II.

HOW GRACE LE BOURBEL TOLD HER STORY, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE name of Harry Le Bourbel's sister with the bright eyes and dimpled shoulders, was Grace, and she was just the sort of girl that any male creature from seventeen to seventy would think himself exceeding lucky to be on good terms with in a country house. Such a laughing honest-hearted Grace was she—a round-faced ringleted Grace—a Grace up to all sorts of innocent fun and frolic, and having a quiet little demure way of her own, that was as incomprehensible as it was irresistible. A kind gentle girl, this blooming Grace of ours, brimming over with pleasant fancies and good thoughts. A girl, whose life as yet had been one long smile, which brightened up her home, and made all around her happy and cont^t Stephen Armitage was not long in find^r.

good qualities of his old friend's pretty sister, of whom he had heard so much. He was quite a household word with her brother—what jolly old Stephen said, (when a schoolboy is called "old" so and so, it is a sure sign that he is a good fellow,) and did, and thought, having formed the staple of his conversation upon many subjects and occasions for years past. So it was that, before they were a day together under the same roof, the pleasant girl and her father's student guest began to look upon each other quite as old friends, and as such sat down together in the twilight to tell and listen to the history of THE PICTURE IN THREE PANELS.

"In the first place," said Grace, shaking her perfumed curls, and leaning back gracefully in her low-seated chair, "in the first place, you must know, that the room which you entered, with the gallery and a corresponding chamber below it, is all that remains of the ancient castle. The rest of the house is comparatively modern, and has been added to the ruins of the old building from time to time. Thus it is that we have all those staircases and passages and windings in and out in which"—with an arch look—"our guests sometimes lose their way. The tapestry room, where the picture hangs, was formerly the state chamber. It has been the chamber of life and death, the birth, the bridal, and the dying chamber of our race, since we found a home in this country, down to my father's accession to the estate. My mother took a dislike to it—my brother was born in London—the spell was broken, and it has never been inhabited since.

"Our family, as you may, perhaps, be aware, is of French extraction. We were Huguenots. We were butchered on St. Bartholomew's Eve! We conquered at

Ivry! We fought and died at Rochelle! It was on that first fatal massacre that Gaston, fifth Count de Francville, was murdered whilst flying from Paris, bearing with him the orphan son of his sworn comrade in arms, and devoted friend, the Sieur de Bourbel. The dagger of the assassin pierced the arm of the child as he clung to his protector, and killed the good old man. The living and the dead fell together—the murderer's knife had but pinned his darling closer to his heart. The child was found, still clinging to the corpse, and weeping bitterly, by a former servant of the Count, and was taken by him to the Chateau de Francville, where he was nurtured with his daughter by its succeeding Lord, as a precious legacy left by his dead father. The little Heloise was a lovely child, a few years younger than her new playmate. She had been betrothed as an infant, according to the custom in those ages, to the Marquis de St. Moran, a young Huguenot noble of great wealth, who, upon attaining a proper age, sought for distinction in arms under the well-known banner of the father of his promised bride. His was a wild, unsteady spirit, and the splendours of the Court, and the insidious promises of the Cardinal, so turned his weak brain, that upon the death of the Duke de Guise and the insurrection of Mayenne, he renounced his religion and his betrothed, and joined the ranks of the Holy Catholic League, as that band of cut-throats and plunderers, who took religion as a mask for their evil passions and greed, were pleased to call themselves.

"When Henry of Navarre succeeded to the throne of France, the Count de Francville marched, with a scanty but dauntless band, to join his standard, and upon his way fell into an ambush commanded by his renegade pupil

The foe were five to one ; but, scorning to surrender to one so vile, he cheered on his faithful followers, who resisted the onslaught of their enemy manfully. But, outnumbered, outflanked, and overwhelmed, they were driven back, crushed, and conquered. Last of all, fighting like a lion at bay, fell the good Count de Francville, some say, by a foul blow at the hand of the Marquis, but certainly under his eyes and by his orders. All the Count's followers were slain or taken prisoners but one, who escaped to bear the fatal tidings to the Widow and Orphan.

"The Baronne de Francville was one of those stern, enduring spirits which the religious persecutions of that age created. She was the daughter of a noble race, and inherited the fire of a long line of warriors. Had she been born a man, she would have been a second Bayard, without fear, and free from reproach. As it was, her ambition was to become the wife of a soldier, the mother of soldiers. The latter wish was never gratified, for no son was born to her.

"When his sad tidings were disclosed by the escaped trooper, and she heard that her child's betrothed was false—that her much-loved lord was dead—she cried in her bitter agony, "Oh ! ye powers, that have denied me a son, raise up for me an avenger!" She then seized and forced open a casket full of valuable jewels which had been presented by the Marquis de St. Moran to Heloise as a bridal gift, and crushed the priceless pearls beneath her feet, saying, 'Thus may it be with him who gave them ; and by this holy book I swear that the hand that he has despised shall remain unwedded for him, who shall bring his craven banner for her dowry, and the traitor's life-blood upon his sword for a marriage gift !'

"Albert, who, by this time, had grown up into manhood, listened with eager joy to this vow. The effect of such words upon a gallant spirit yearning for distinction—upon a noble nature chafing beneath the bonds of dependence—upon a young heart throbbing with secret love—may easily be imagined; and he resolved within himself, '*This will I do or die.*' *This is the moment seized by the painter in the first or right-hand panel.*

"This was not the only resolve made in that chamber of woe. The glitter of the scattered gold and gems was too great a temptation to the trooper. In the depth of that night, when all was still, he crept stealthily to where they yet lay; and having secreted them upon his person, was making his way towards the stable to steal a horse for his flight, when his quick glance encountered the shadow of a man upon the wall. It was Albert Le Bourbel quickly approaching the turret, in which the room where the jewels had been, was situated. 'Ho, ho!' he chuckled, 'the bees cluster to the honey.' At the moment that he uttered this, Albert turned into the armoury of the castle. For his own safety the trooper followed, and watched him. He saw him take down from a niche a suit of mail, and a sword which hung by itself. It was the armour and the sword of Albert's brave father! The chivalrous youth drew the blade from its scabbard, and, reverently kissing the treasured steel, knelt down, and prayed fervently. He then donned the coat of mail, hurried to the stables, mounted his horse, and swimming the moat, was soon out of sight.

"'Now,' mused the villain, 'why should *two* fly when the absence of *one* will suit all ends!' Breaking off a few links of a gold chain, he dropped them in the stall

from which the fugitive had led his charger, and retired noiselessly to his chamber.

"The next morning all was confusion. The jewels and a large sum of money had been stolen, a steed had been taken from the stables, and in the vacant stall was found part of the plunder, evidently dropped in the eagerness of flight! The whole household was summoned. There was but one of its members absent—Albert Le Bourbel! It was all too clear. His protector dead, he had forsaken the defenceless hearth, and, worse than all, he had robbed his benefactors! So clear, indeed, appeared his guilt, that no inquiries were made; his father's arms were not missed; and the prudent villain who had seen him take them held his peace. All believed Albert treacherous and vile—all save the playmate of his youth, the fair Héloïse, now blossoming into womanhood. Evil report and adversity only served to make him dearer to her; she loved him too deeply, too ingenuously, to deem that he *could* be false, and in defending his fair fame, with all the warmth and strength of her pure affection, her secret became known. The rage of the stern Baronne, when she discovered her child's feelings towards one whom she considered the basest of the base, passed all bounds.

"Meanwhile Albert rode on—on—on, night and day, till he reached the camp of Henry of Navarre, where his noble bearing and high courage soon made him an object of remark, not only to the leaders of the Huguenot army, but even to the chivalrous monarch himself. Then came the decisive field of Ivry, when the army of the League—

With all its priest-led warriors,
And all its rebel peers—

placed itself menacingly between the Huguenot king and

his throne. How Albert's eager eye glanced down the long line of foemen, and what a grim smile lighted up his manly features, when he saw, proudly flaunting in the midst, the crimson and gold banner of the Marquis de St. Moran! The onslaught commenced, and from that banner his horse's head was never turned. Thrice had he slain the squire who bore it, and thrice the wave of war rolled between him and his prize. At last, the rebel ranks began to waver, and the Marquis de St. Moran, seizing his standard from the grasp of his sole surviving squire, rallied his men-at-arms for a last and desperate charge. But Albert was awaiting him, and in an instant the stripling hero and the renowned knight met in full career. Fearful was the shock! Albert's wounded horse sank beneath the fierce onset of the Marquis, whose spear, penetrating his adversary's breast-plate, sank deep in his side. But the triumph of the traitor was a short one. Springing like a panther from his dying charger, Albert seized with a grasp of iron the banner of his foe, whilst with his free hand he plunged his sword, till it broke, in the rebel's heart. *This is the scene represented in the centre panel.*

"For a long, weary time, the gallant youth flickered between life and death; but, even in his greatest agony, he would never suffer a broken sword, and a torn banner, to be loosened from his grasp.

"Then came the accession of Henry IV. to the throne of France, and the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes, which filled with joy every Huguenot heart throughout the kingdom. Even the grief-stricken Baronne threw off her mourning, and rejoiced in the open celebration of her religion.

"The crafty villain whose crime was laid to poor

Albert's charge had, for his superior military abilities, been promoted to the post of Seneschal of the castle, whilst his victim lay chafing beneath his wound, ignorant of the charge made against him, dreaming of his sweet lady-love, and yearning to lay at the feet of his noble benefactress the trophies he had won. His birth was noble, his blood pure as her own. He had been knighted on the battle-field by the sword of the king. What was now to check his happiness? The thought of the bliss in prospect for him tinged his wasted cheek, and his heart beat high, as, faint from his unhealed wound, but withal happy and confident, he painfully wended his way towards the home of his childhood, and at last, after many a weary day's journey, the distant towers of Francville gladdened his anxious gaze. Already could he recognise afar off the waving jasmine that scented the bower of his loved Heloise, when he was suddenly seized, dragged from his horse, and, stunned by the fall, became insensible.

"When consciousness returned, he found himself immured in a dungeon, apparently beneath the ground; but, to his extreme joy, discovered that his trophies had been cast in after him, and lay in a corner of the prison. His captors had not known their value!

"The Seneschal had heard from some country people that Albert was slowly returning, and fearing for his own safety, he caused him to be waylaid and privately imprisoned in one of the cells beneath the foundations of the castle. The torture of mind and body occasioned by this reverse of fortune—shut out from the light of day, the light of love, plunged, when his joy was highest, into utter hopelessness—caused my hero's wound to open afresh; his gallant spirit broke down under his heavy

afflictions, and the shades of death began to close around him. Death alone could release him from his sufferings, and at last death came—but not to him.

“One of the ruffians employed by the false Seneschal to waylay Albert having been convicted of robbery and murder, was sentenced to death on the scaffold. In his last moments the pangs of remorse began to gnaw his heart, and in his confession he told the priest that he had assisted in causing the imprisonment in a Huguenot fortress of a follower of the Marquis de St. Moran (for such he supposed Le Bourbel to be, misled by the well-known arms emblazoned upon the banner he carried). Indignant at the supposed wrong to a convert of his Church, the monk hastened to the castle, and of the Baronne in person demanded the liberation of the prisoner.

“Angered at his reiterated assurances that a soldier of the Holy League *was* immured in one of the dungeons, the fiery dame seized the keys from the hands of the unwilling Seneschal, and bidding all present to follow as witnesses, led the monk into every room of the castle, and every cell beneath its walls, notwithstanding the earnest assertions of her retainer, that the search was a vain one. They thoroughly searched the vaults below the foundations, and were once more ascending into the daylight, when they passed a low door, half concealed in the masonry; it was opened, and a pit was disclosed, so foul, that all present, even the obstinate priest turned away, not deeming it possible that a human being could exist in such a den, when a low moan was heard. The priest dashed forward, and calling to the torch bearer to follow, dragged the emaciated form of poor Albert to the feet of the astonished Baronne. The base Seneschal :

all was discovered, turned to fly; but was seized by order of his lady, to whom, praying for pardon and mercy, he made a full confession of his perfidy.

"Wine and other restoratives having been afforded to the sufferer, he at length gained strength to speak, and pointed to a corner of the dungeon, whence his father's sword, broken and blood-stained, his own pierced coat of mail, and the banner of the Marquis de St. Moran were produced by the wondering attendants. The truth flashed instantly across the mind of the chivalrous Baronne, and, probably for the first time since her youth, her proud spirit gave way, and she wept aloud.

"'Oh, thou noble heart!' she exclaimed, 'and is this thy reward?' Then, rising and dashing away the tears that still coursed down her pale cheeks, she added, 'I will keep my vow; send for our good pastor—send for the Lady Heloise.'

"She then knelt down upon the cold floor, and supporting with a mother's tenderness the head of the dying man, sorrowed and wept over him, and said, 'more honour will there be to be called the widow of such as thou art, than to become the mother of kings.'

"And there, in that dismal vault—as we see in the right-hand panel of the picture—the living and the dying were wed, according to the rites of the Reformed Faith, by the old pastor whom the noble Huguenot had protected. *There* was the nuptial benediction spoken—*there* the bridegroom, his life-blood ebbing away at every breath, placed the ring upon the finger of youth, health, and beauty."



Here Grace Le Bourbel paused to see what effect her

legend had had upon her auditor; and if it has not interested you as much as it did him, the fault is mine in repeating it.

"And did Albert really die?" inquired Armitage, after having thanked the fair relator.

"Why of course not," she replied, gaily; "do you suppose I am going to tell you a sad tale on Christmas Day? No! thanks to God's mercy and his wife's devotion, he lived to be a good and a great man—a wise one, too—for upon the death of his friend and king, seeing afar off the storm that was soon to assail his fellow-religionists, he set sail with those he loved for free England, and, obtaining a grant of this estate and castle, became a naturalised British subject and the founder of our family. His hard-won trophies he never abandoned; they have remained as heir-looms with us, and the picture, which caused you so much surprise, was painted by his grandson, whom, as you ought to know, was a noted painter in his day."

Stephen Armitage was sorry when the soft voice ceased, and resolved to wander about every night in hopes that he might encounter something with a legend attached to it as an excuse for having its story told to him by blooming, pleasant Grace Le Bourbel. Ah! Grace Le Bourbel! It was a pretty name! What could have induced her to change it that beautiful spring morning for the prosaic cognomen of ARMITAGE? Can any of my fair readers tell me? I fancy some of them can.

THE FILIBUSTER.

A STORY OF NICARAGUA.

PART I.—CHAPTER I.

WHICH IS BRIEF, AND INTRODUCTORY.

WHO has not heard of the Filibusters? that fierce, that reckless handful of desperadoes who landed upon the shores of Nicaragua to kill, plunder, and destroy, under a shallow pretence of freeing that miserable country from an obnoxious Government. Who has not wondered at the boldness of the scheme—the weakness (to use no harsher word) of the State that permitted its citizens to join in, and countenance it—the bloody deeds that heralded the attempt, and the horrors that, after a brief but eventful campaign, caused it to be abandoned? Such an enterprise seems strangely out of place in the latter part of the nineteenth century; and, surrounded as we are with civilization and the blessings of domestic peace—accustomed as we are to govern our dealings by that respect for liberty, life, and property, which strict obedience to law can alone engender—we can scarcely realise its truth. It is only when we take into consideration the disorganised state of the country which was its scene, the loose morality which made its conception a patriotic act, and the materials

for carrying it into execution which unfortunately were, and still are, ready at hand amongst the refuse of the vast immigrant population of the United States—that we can disabuse our minds of the notion that we are reading some old tale of the Buccaneers dated a century ago, but dressed up in modern guise to deceive our credulity.

And who were the Filibusters? It is not easy to tell, except that the majority of them were the very quintessence of rascaldom skimmed from the entire surface of the Western Hemisphere. Fierce, lawless spirits created by bad government; skilled marauders, many of them trained amidst the rebellions and civil wars which appear to be the principal political products of South America; men with nothing to lose, and everything to gain—who obeyed only their cravings for excitement and plunder, and those who could best satiate their desires. Woe to the unsuccessful leader who thwarted them!

It forms no part of my purpose, and is far from my desire, to become the chronicler of their campaign. I have to narrate only one of its episodes, and shall lose no time in taking my reader straight to the scene of action.

Immediately after having effected a landing at Fortara (a harbour on the Pacific Ocean), the main body of the Filibusters advanced towards the interior, leaving a small detachment to follow more slowly, protecting their rear the while, and obtaining supplies. This detachment was, in fact, an independent expedition acting with General Walker, and sharing in his enterprise, but owing obedience only to its own chief, Ramón De Mortas. Great was the satisfaction of the leaders of the enterprise, and the Nicaraguan rebels with whom they sided, when they heard that that dreaded leader had espoused their cause.

If Ramon De Mortas had lived in Europe in the middle ages, he would have been a free lance. Had he been an Englishman in the days of the Tudors he would have been a moss-trooper upon the Scottish border. Had fortune cast his lot in life as a Brahmin in the present day, he would, most probably, at this moment be harassing our gallant troops in the jungles of Bengal. Being by birth a Nicaraguan he was naturally an adventurer, and became a Filibuster, having passed through the transition stages of conspirator, guerilla, and pirate. The name of Lorino, the Guerilla Chief, has not yet ceased to have its terrors for the traveller. Captain Wolf, the rover, is still execrated by the shipowners of Brazil and Costa Rica, and a placard offering a reward of five hundred dollars for the apprehension of Ralph Forcas, for *murder*, may yet be seen in the police offices of New York. Still, Ramon De Mortas is a free man; he has given up robbery in its more vulgar form, for some years, and has enriched himself and his followers with pillage committed under the sanction of war. Wherever there was fighting to be done—and there has been no lack of it lately in South America—there would this leader and his band be found, in the pay of the strongest side, or, if any doubt existed as to which that was, fighting against the one which had the most to lose. There were good reasons for his not offering his services to the Nicaraguan Government, and so he joined the Filibusters, and their cat's-paws, the rebels. Little by little he had weeded from his band those who knew more than was convenient about his past history, and at the time of which we are speaking there were but two members of it who were acquainted with his early career, namely, Matteo his lieutenant, and Gabrielle Vincent.

Alas ! poor Gabrielle ! Hers was the old sad story of blind romantic passion, and heartless treachery; of woman's love, and man's ingratitude. But years, long years of misery, have passed since her fall ; and if tears of anguish, and a life of remorse can blot away a sin like hers, it is not unforgiven.

The remaining followers of De Mortas were of the stamp already described, with the exception of a few honest dupes who were led to believe that they had been recruited for service in the national army of Nicaragua against rebellious disturbers of its peace.

Upon the night which followed the departure of the main body of the Filibusters, the advance of De Mortas was threatened by a small body of regular soldiers that were stationed in a neighbouring town, to which some farmers, whose houses had been plundered, had brought intelligence of the landing of the invaders. A sharp conflict ensued, and the Nicaraguans, who fell into the error of despising the insurgents, were defeated, and put to rout, with small loss to the Filibusters; who greatly exceeded them in numbers, and were very favourably posted. It is upon the tenth morning after this occurrence, that the action of our story commences.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAMP.

THE first rays of the rising sun had hardly yet dawned upon the entrenchment of the Filibusters, and the watch-fires were still burning brightly, when the hangings of one of the few tents that formed their camp were drawn aside.

and a woman, bearing an earthenware pitcher in her hand, passed out into the forest towards where the rippling sound of water, showed that a small stream was flowing from the rocks. "He will be thirsty again," she murmured to herself, "when he awakes."

It was easy to see that she had once been very beautiful, and that Sorrow had had a larger share than Time in ploughing the furrows upon her brow. Her step was feeble, and it was with difficulty that she lifted her pitcher from the ledge in the rock, where she had placed it to be filled by the falling water. But there was that in her cold gray eye which told of a spirit which neither sorrow nor toil could subdue.

She returned to the tent, and on throwing the canvass still further aside, sate down noiselessly beside a couch of dried prairie grass, upon which a young man was stretched, steeped in the deep but uneasy slumber that follows the cessation of long-endured pain. His dreams were not pleasant ones, to judge by his knitted brows and violent gestures.

"Mount, captain, mount! take my horse!" he muttered in his sleep. "Quick, quick! So—take my revolver—ha!" In the excitement of his dream he started up, and the pain that the movement caused to his wounded side (for he had received a bayonet thrust in the skirmish before alluded to) wakened him.

"Where am I?" he exclaimed, gazing uneasily around. "Ah, mother! is that you?" and a softened expression stole across his features as his gaze encountered that of the watcher. "I have been dreaming," he continued, passing his hand across his brow, vacantly; "dreaming over again the fight in which I was wounded."

"And in which you so rashly perilled your life," added Gabrielle; for it was she whom the wounded man had called "mother."

"Rashly!" he replied, with a smile. "Nay, 'twas to rescue my captain that I quitted the shelter of the stockade—it was my duty; any member of the band would have done the same for me."

Gabrielle leaned her pale cheek upon her hand, and, rather musing to herself than replying to the speaker, said softly—

"Any one—but one."

"Whom do you except?"

"De Mortas!" The words came hissing through her set teeth.

"Our captain?" exclaimed her questioner, again starting from his couch.

"Hush!" said Gabrielle, laying her finger upon his lips, and gently forcing him back into a recumbent position. "Lionel, do you know into whose service you have entered under that man?"

"Well," was the reply, "that of the brave American, who is about to plant the flag of freedom amongst this wretched people!" and a flush of pride mantled on Lionel's wasted cheek as he spoke.

Gabrielle arose quickly, and quitting the tent, cast a brief but searching glance around, and when assured that no one was within ear-shot, resumed her seat, and in an anxious voice, replied—

"Distrust that man, Lionel! Those who follow him are either his dupes or his accomplices in an enterprise over which a thin veil of patriotism is cast to hide the machinations of the robber and the cut-throat."

"Mother! this is treason!" Lionel exclaimed.

"It is *truth*, and that is always treason to the guilty. Think for a moment, Lionel, and judge for yourself. With whom did De Mortas serve when first you carried arms as one of his band?"

"With the Mexicans, against the United States."

"He is by birth a Nicaraguan?"

"True," replied Lionel, not able to fathom the meaning of his questioner; "but Nicaragua took no part in that war."

"She is invaded in this," resumed Gabrielle, "and by citizens of the country which was your captain's former enemy, but with whom he now sides."

Lionel was silent for a moment. From his boyhood he had followed the fortunes of De Mortas under the care of Gabrielle, and this was the first time he had ever heard the conduct of his chief called in question.

"Do not let them dupe you into the belief that this is an honourable war," Gabrielle resumed, her voice trembling with suppressed emotion; "it is a plot of thieves, and if you aid them, you will become as they are."

"Mother," said Lionel, taking her hand and gazing inquiringly in her flushed face, "why do you speak of De Mortas thus? It was with your consent that I fought under his command in Mexico."

"Yes;" Gabrielle resumed quickly, "because you were about to serve in a foreign country against a strange people, in a cause that, at least, was honourable. But now! oh, Lionel! weigh well my words: this land, so soon to be deluged in blood, is your birth-place—its defenders, against whom you are about to draw your sword, are your brothers. You may even, by some horrible acci-

dent, help to ravage the home in which you drew your first breath, and shorten the days of those who gave you life."

"Mother!" exclaimed Lionel, aghast at the *wildness* of the speaker's manner, and amazed at the words she uttered.

Gabrielle clasped her hands upon her brow, as though to shut out some recollection that was forcing itself upon her; then, after a painful pause, and a long, deep sigh, she continued in a low, calm voice, in which there was no trace of her former emotion—

"Lionel—dear Lionel—look at me well, that *you may* know that what I am about to say is earnest, *solemn* truth. The words have lain buried in my heart for many a day, but they must out at last. I am not your mother, Lionel!"

"Oh, Heavens!" he ejaculated, "not my mother!"

"No, Lionel, you are not the child of my blood," she said, falling upon his breast, and covering his face with tears and kisses, "but the firstborn of my love—the only creature in this world for whom I have cared to live. Now listen to me patiently, for I have much to tell you," she continued, resuming her seat by the couch, and with an effort mastering her emotion. "Fifteen years ago there was no war, and De Mortas and his band (wolves that they were!) wandered over this country, robbing and plundering. Your captain was then known as Lorino the Guerilla! you start, but it is true, he is that man. One day they attacked a country mansion, defended only by one brave man, who, in the narrow doorway, kept our band at bay, until his wife and her women had escaped—when he turned, leaped from a window, and joined them in their flight. The house was sacked from top to bottom, and then was fired in several places. When the flames were at their height, I heard a cry—a child's cry—issue

from one of the upper rooms. Lionel! my only little one was then not three days dead : thank God he never knew what you must learn ere long—his mother's shame. A wild emotion filled my vacant heart ; I tore myself from the grasp of those who would have prevented me, and rushed into the blazing house. I cannot tell what followed. I can remember nothing but a flash, a roaring in my ears, a sensation of choking, but when I recovered my senses, the burning staircase had given way within, and I was stunned by the fall ; I found that I had saved the child."

"Oh, mother—for I will ever call you so," said Lionel, regarding Gabrielle with a look of the tenderest affection ; "am *I* that child ?"

" You are."

" And my parents, what became of them—have you never seen them since ?"

" Never ! But this much I do know—this is their country, and if they live, Lara, the city which the Filibusters are now on their march to besiege—is their home. Oh, Lionel ! again I say, quit this band ; become an outcast, a beggar, if fortune wills it so, but not a traitor—not a parricide."

" I will die first !" said Lionel. " De Mortas will soon arise. I will tell him all, and demand my discharge."

" Are you mad ?" replied Gabrielle. " Do you suppose that he would allow *you*, who know the whole plan of the campaign, to quit his camp alive ? No ! you must away secretly, this very night. I will provide means for your escape—fly—and warn your countrymen of their danger."

" And *betray* my comrades !" exclaimed Lionel, with emotion. " never ! God help me !—wretch that I am !

What is to be done? If I remain, I am a traitor; if I fly, I am a traitor still. Mother! I will not leave you—do not drive me away. What are my parents to me?—they left me to perish miserably, and you—you have taken their place in my heart. I will never desert you."

"Hush!" said Gabrielle, releasing herself from his embrace, "some one approaches; what can be the meaning of this?"

Well might she inquire; for the sight that presented itself was a strange one, and sufficient for the moment to cause a diversion of the painful thoughts which were passing through Lionel's mind.

First came Mark Wylde, an English member of the band, who was absent without leave from prison in Jamaica, carrying at arm's length a photographic camera fixed upon a stand, and which he regarded with a ludicrously puzzled expression, holding it with the brass lens well turned up in the air, as though he fancied it must be some infernal machine which he might fire off without knowing how, to the utter destruction of everybody. Following him, that is to say, dragged along by two sturdy Filibusters, came its unfortunate proprietor—a little fellow about five feet two in height, dressed in a sort of semi-military costume, and wearing an incipient beard and moustache, of the hue and texture of a well-worn nail-brush, upon his little round dumpling of a face, which was now convulsed with the most abject terror.

Lionel for the moment forgot his troubles, and fairly laughed outright; whilst the wan features of Gabrielle even relaxed into a smile at the little man's absurd gestures of entreaty and despair. His story was soon told: and when Lionel had explained to Mark Wylde the h

less nature of the apparatus that had so powerfully evoked his suspicions, and had persuaded the Filibusters to release their hold of his collar, it was wonderful how quickly his courage returned.

"Now then," said Lionel, "tell us who you are?"

"I will," replied the little photographer, shaking his bullet-head in a mysterious manner.

"I'm *our own correspondent*—there!" and he drew back a step, as though to give space for the gestures of surprise and admiration that were to follow so portentous an announcement. But it had not the expected effect.

"Ah," said Lionel, "indeed! and what have you come here for?"

"To take sketches of the country, and write news about the war, for the *New York Illustrated Thunder Bolt*," and the little man drew himself up to his full(!) height—thereby bringing his eyes on a level with Lionel's sash—as he asserted his connexion with that influential journal.

"Where have you come from to-day?" inquired Lionel.

"From Lara."

"From Lara," Lionel repeated thoughtfully; "have you lived there long?"

"Only five days," Tinto replied.

"Ha! Well, I must not detain you here. Take him to the captain, and ask for a free pass for him in my name," continued Lionel, addressing Wylde, "he will scarce refuse me the request. The fellow is quite harmless, and see that you use him more gently than you did just now, and I dare say he will take your likenesses for you to give your sweethearts."

"No! will you?" exclaimed the men, charmed at the idea.

"That I will," replied Tinto, only too glad to have a chance of propitiating his captors, "and free gratis too—I'll make heroes of every one of you. *You won't be the first that have been made by a newspaper correspondent.*"

And the little photographer and his instrument, now no longer an object of suspicion, were carried off in triumph towards the tent of De Mortas, and Lionel and Gabrielle were once more left alone.

CHAPTER III.

EMMELINE.

ABOUT mid-day, a foraging party that had been despatched at early dawn to collect supplies, returned into camp, bringing with them a handsome travelling carriage, which, with its inmates—a soldierly-looking old man, and a beautiful girl, apparently his daughter—they had surprised and captured. The prisoners were evidently persons of high station, who would be able to pay a considerable sum by way of ransom; and great consequently was the excitement amongst the band, as they were conducted towards the ruined tower which De Mortas had made his head-quarters.

With an erect form, and fearless brow, the brave old man suffered himself to be led forward, only relaxing his stern expression now and then, to stoop and whisper a word or two of reassurance to the pale and trembling girl that clung to his side.

"Now, Sir," he said, folding his arms, and regarding De Mortas as though *he* were the prisoner; "it is from you, I believe, that I am to seek an explanation of thi-

outrage. I am Colonel Sartalli, of the Nicaraguan senate, and I demand to know by what authority I am detained here."

De Mortas, at the moment that his Lieutenant, Matteo, entered with the prisoners, was poring over a map of the country, and was so absorbed in its study that he noticed not their entrance. The clear ringing tones in which the demand of Colonel Sartalli was uttered, aroused him : he lifted his eyes, and encountering the stern gaze of the prisoner, a deep flush passed across his brow, he turned aside hurriedly, beckoned Matteo to follow him, and retired round an angle of the ruin.

"Matteo," he whispered, "it is *he* ! Do you not recognise him ?"

"Whom, captain ?"

"Have you forgotten what happened the last time we were in this country, when we sacked and fired a house not twenty miles from this spot ?"

"Why, captain," mused Matteo, unable to recall the outrage of which his chief had spoken ; "we've sacked and fired so many in our time, that—"

"I mean the house from which Gabrielle rescued young Lionel," exclaimed De Mortas, seizing the arm of his lieutenant ; "that," pointing to Colonel Sartalli, "is the man who defended it so well, and slew my brother—Curse him !" and a heavy scowl mantled upon the Filibuster's brow at the recollection.

Matteo stood aghast ; it was indeed the same !

"By heavens, captain, you are right ! He, then, is Lionel's fa——"

"Hush !" said De Mortas, "he must not recognise us. Send all the men away : we must speak with him alone.

Where is Gabrielle? Send for her, and bid her take charge of the lady for awhile."

" Well, I do call this a sell," said Tinto—(who, by performing his promise of immortalising everybody in photography, had become a most popular person in the camp)—when he was informed of De Mortas's order that everyone should leave the ruins. " Just, too, as I had got them all in focus for a group, I'm told to pack up my traps and be off! Never mind, I am determined to take a picture of this spot—so I suppose I must find some other point of view."

So saying, the little photographer shouldered his camera and walked grumbling away.

It was with difficulty that the poor weeping girl could be persuaded to quit her protector; but he gently untwined her encircling arms from his neck, and imprinting a tender kiss upon the pale brow that lent upon his bosom, said cheerfully—

" Go, Emmeline: fear not, my darling child—they dare not harm you. We shall soon be free. Leave me—and now," he added—addressing De Mortas when the last Filibuster had quitted the ruins, and Emmeline and Gabrielle had retired from sight—" again I demand by what right you molest peaceful travellers."

" The common right of war in an enemy's country," replied De Mortas, for the first time allowing his interrogator to see his countenance.

" Merciful Powers," exclaimed Sartalli, starting back as though stung by an adder, " where have I seen that face before? ha! yes—'tis he—robber! murderer of my child! I know you now;" and, with one vigorous spring, he seized De Mortas by the throat, and hurled him to the ground, shouting the while for " help! help!"

A brief but fearful struggle ensued. The combatants locked in each other's arms—now up—now down—changed their positions so rapidly that Matteo was unable to assist his chief, and although De Mortas by superior strength succeeded in getting his prisoner beneath him, he could not shake off the convulsive clutch with which the latter had seized him by the throat.

"Leave go your hold!" he muttered, half strangled.

"Never, murderer!"

"Fool! leave go your hold!" gasped the Filibuster.

"Help! help!"

"What! you will have it? There, then," and releasing his grasp, De Mortas drew his long knife, and plunged it in Sartalli's heart.

For a moment the combatants stood motionless, each gazing with an expression impossible to describe in the other's face. Then the shadow of death stole rapidly over that of Colonel Sartalli; his grip of the Filibuster's throat relaxed, and he sank slowly to the earth; whilst De Mortas—his eyes almost starting from his head, and his lips and cheeks black with congested blood—staggered away, and would have fallen too, if he had not clutched a projecting portion of the ruins for support.

"You have killed him," exclaimed Matteo, leaning over the prostrate form; "that was a foul blow, Lorino. I thought we were to be soldiers now, not brigands. It was a foul blow, I say, and I for one will not shield you from its consequences."

That was a fatal error of Matteo's, calling De Mortas by his guerilla name. It reminded him that the speaker was one of the only two persons who had the clue to his early history, and now that a career lay before him in

which honours and powers were, as he thought, to be acquired, the reflection struck harshly on his mind, and awoke the fiend within him. In a moment his plan was settled. He knelt down beside Sartalli, took one of his pistols from his belt, placed it in his hand, and pointing both at Matteo, who had turned and was standing with his back to the spot, he fired. Then releasing his hold, the hand of the murdered man, with the weapon still in its clasp, fell heavily to its side, and De Mortas having blown a shrill blast upon the whistle which he carried to summon his band around him, rushed from the ruin, crying loudly for assistance.

In a few moments the whole band was attracted to the spot.

"You are tardy, my men," De Mortas said; "no thanks to *you* that I am alive to tell you so."

"What has happened?" exclaimed Mark Wylde, starting back at the sight of the corpses, "the stranger dead!"

"Yes; and Matteo too," his captain replied, "murdered by him. See—here is the pistol with which he shot him, still warm and smoking in his grasp."

"Poor Matteo—poor fellow!" exclaimed the Filibusters, crowding around the dead body of their companion.

"He knew this man," continued De Mortas, indicating Sartalli, "he was a spy!"

A sullen murmur of disgust ran round the assembled band. De Mortas knew well how to work upon their feelings.

"Yes," he resumed, "a spy. Matteo, poor faithful fellow, denounced him to me, and was basely shot by him as you see, in the back, whilst the words were on his lips. This other pistol," pointing to one that had fallen to the ground

from Sartalli's belt in the struggle, "was reserved for me; but, furious at my poor friend's fall, I grappled with his murderer before he could level it, and in self-defence stabbed him to the heart."

Another murmur ran round the assembly, but this time it was a murmur of applause.

"Remove the bodies," said De Mortas, satisfied with the effect which his plausible invention had produced. "Poor Matteo! he loved me well—served with me everywhere, and knew," he muttered to himself, as he turned aside, "too much—too much."

At this moment a wild shriek echoed through the ruins. Emmeline had heard the report of the pistol, and escaping from the women in whose charge Gabrielle had placed her, rushed towards the spot where she had parted with her protector.

The first object that she encountered was his dead body dragged along with every mark of insult by the deceived Filibusters! Horror, like a flash of flame, struck upon her brain, and for the moment seemed to wither it. She stood spell-bound; her strength deserted her; and she would have fallen prostrate to the earth if a man had not darted forward and supported her in his arms.

It was Lionel!

Never had the young adventurer's eyes fallen upon a creature so lovely as the poor defenceless girl who lay with closed eyes and dishevelled tresses in his embrace, and it was with feelings of awe that he gazed upon so much beauty steeped in such deep sorrow, and surrounded on all sides by such a vast abyss of danger. De Mortas too, but with far different emotions, saw that she was beautiful, and the bad light which flashed in his eyes when he conceived his

plan for silencing Matteo, gleamed up again as he called Gabrielle, and gave Emmeline's still insensible form into her charge.

"Bear her gently to Gabrielle's tent, some of you," he said. "There let her await my further orders. And you, Mark Wylde, mount guard there, and see that no one enters or leaves it. Are you armed?"

"No, captain, not now; but I'll go and get my rifle."

"No matter—here, take these pistols," said De Mortas, giving him those that had been worn by Sartalli; "and if any should dare dispute my orders, use them; they are now loaded."

Having given some further directions, De Mortas dismissed his followers, and, lighting a cigar, sate down and mused upon the events of the day, with a satisfied smile upon his lips.

His face would not have assumed so pleasant an expression had the Filibuster known that the lens of a photographic camera had been directed upon him for the last half hour, from a hill that overlooked the ruins.

PART II.—CHAPTER IV.

GABRIELLE'S TENT.—THE FLIGHT.

THE sudden and violent death of a comrade was too common an occurrence with the Filibusters to cause anything but a momentary cessation of their ordinary feelings and pursuits. Scarcely had the sod been replaced upon the grave of Matteo, than the song and the laugh, the rattle of dice-boxes, and its usual accompaniment of curses and blasphemy, re-echoed throughout the encampment.

The foraging party had been more fortunate than usual ; they had procured a large supply of fresh provisions, by the simple process of driving away the live stock of a farm that lay in their route, slaughtering its poultry and completely stripping its garden of fruit and vegetables. But sumptuous as was the entertainment which was thus provided for the hungry adventurers, it would not have been worth having without the copious libations which the capture, on its road to Leon, of a waggon heavily laden with the first fruits of the vintage afforded them. Upon any other occasion De Mortas would have checked, and put down with a strong hand, the wild orgie which was about to reign in his entrenchment. But deeds had been done that day which he wished to be forgotten, and others had to be performed to which he did not desire to draw attention. His scouts had scoured the country round, and there was no enemy to be seen or heard of as approaching, so he gave up the new burning liquor freely to his men, and still sate alone in his hut amongst the ruins, gazing towards the closed tent in which, guarded by Mark Wylde, Gabrielle and Emmeline were to pass the night ; and as he gazed a wicked gleam shot up in his hard gray eyes, and a fiendish smile played upon his lips.

"In an hour's time," he muttered, "the wine will have done its work, and the darkness will have set in."

But if the Filibuster flattered himself that his designs upon his fair prisoner were unsuspected, he was much mistaken. Poor Gabrielle knew him too well to doubt for a moment what was the meaning of the fiery glance he had cast upon Emmeline's lifeless form, and the purpose for which he had had her conveyed to that lonely tent.

"A fate worse than death awaits her, or I know not

De Mortas," she whispered in Lionel's ear as she received Emmeline, still fainting, from his arms. "Save her, Lionel! Escape to Lara to her friends—her safety will be your passport. Come at midnight. Do not answer, but remember."

Lionel required no second warning—he had already determined to protect the lovely stranger if necessary with his life. Whilst she remained supported in his embrace, she had for a moment recovered consciousness, her eyelids opened, and the lustrous orbs within poured forth a mute appeal for help and sympathy that sank into his heart, and set its yet untouched love-chords quivering. Then, when the Filibusters approached to remove her, she clung to him as though she had seen registered in the fond gaze with which he regarded her, the silent oath he had sworn to shield her from harm, and smiling in gratitude, again relapsed into unconsciousness in his arms. The bare idea of her remaining in the power of De Mortas was unendurable to him. "Yes, Gabrielle is right," he mused, following with lingering glance the retreating form of Emmeline; "she must escape to-night, and I with her, but how? Time must show! Oh, how slowly the hours pass away—will midnight never come!"

There is but little twilight in the latitude in which Nicaragua is situated. It is broad daylight one half hour, and black darkness the next, and as the night came on, the camp of the Filibusters presented a picture such as Rembrandt would have delighted to paint. The sky was overcast with red, rugged clouds, threatening one of those thunder-storms which burst in such fearful grandeur in the tropics. In the background towered the dark forest, almost impervious to daylight owing to the masses of vegetation of every shade

which grew, and twined, and matted together from tree to tree. There, on the right flank, was the abattis (made of trees felled and laid side by side with their branches stripped of leaves, and pointed so as to present a sort of *chevaux-de-frise* to an assailant), which extended from the ruins, where the hut of De Mortas was erected, to the shores of the lake of Nicaragua, a distance of about three hundred yards, leaving the remainder of the flank to be defended by the waters of that inland sea which glittered for miles upon the right hand. With their left flank protected by a ravine which ran nearly parallel to the lake, the Filibusters had lighted their camp-fires, and the orgie, before mentioned, was at its height. The dry wood blazed and crackled, sending myriads of bright sparks soaring away into the black night, and lighting up with a lurid glow the groups of revellers, which, in picturesque confusion, were scattered around; now and then revealing, when a gust of wind freshened the flames, the lonely tent upon the hill side, in front of which Mark Wylde sate cursing his ill-luck at being set upon duty on such a night, and anxiously waiting to be relieved from his guard.

It was nearly midnight, and Lionel, who had made his yet unhealed wound his excuse for not joining the revels, and who for the last three hours had been wandering in the forest, devising plan after plan of escape, in all of which some insuperable difficulty existed—not for him, but for the delicately-nurtured girl who was to be the partner of his flight—passed under the shadow of the ruins bearing a horseman's cloak on his arm, and, grasping his long knife, loosened in its sheath, made towards the tent of Gabrielle.

As he approached, a fitful flash of the fire revealed to him that Wylde was on the watch.

"What, not relieved yet!" he exclaimed to himself, passing behind a tree which concealed him from the sentry, "that is indeed unfortunate! Any other member of the band I could have tricked or bribed, but he—he is faithful as steel to his duty. There is but one way—" and his keen knife gleamed from its sheath as he stepped forward, and stealthily approached the spot where his comrade, unconscious of his presence, was sitting. He raised high his knife, but the hand that held it fell powerless to his side; "I cannot do it," he mused, "poor fellow! All means must fail ere this—still she *must* escape."

"Why, Mark," he said aloud, laying his hand upon the Filibuster's shoulder.

In an instant the sentry's pistol was levelled within an inch of Lionel's brow—but he quailed not.

"Ah, boy, is it you?" said Mark, lowering his weapon, "how you startled me."

"On guard, still, Mark?"

"Oh, of course," he muttered, "just because there's fun, dancing, and drinking, and dicing going on in the camp; that is my luck—bah!"

"Are you on duty out of your turn?" Lionel inquired.

"*Turn!* it's always my turn for work, and never for play—I'm an Englishman, I am—says the captain. I'm to be depended upon, I am, says he! I never quit my post, or shirk my duty, I don't; that's my character! and what comes of it? Why, I'm stuck up here in the cold, Heaven only knows what for, whilst everybody else is enjoying himself. Any other fellow would have been off to the camp-fire long ago—but I, ugh! I'm a fool, and stay."

"Is there not anyone who would come and take your place for an hour?" asked Lionel, who had begun to conceive a scheme of turning the temptations of the wine waggon to good account.

"He'd be a bigger fool than I am, whoever did," growled Mark, lighting a fresh pipe, "no; it's every man for himself here, and the devil take the hindmost—that's me."

"Mark," said Lionel, after a pause, "you and I have always been good friends, have we not?"

"Ay, boy, that we have."

"It was you who taught me to ride, and shoot, and throw the lasso."

"Ah, you can beat me at all that now," replied Mark. "You're a sharp lad."

"And a grateful one, too, I hope. Come, old fellow, in return for your many kindnesses to me, I'll do you a good turn to-night—you shall join the carousal yonder, and I will take your place here."

It was with difficulty that Lionel could suppress all evidence of the eagerness with which he awaited Mark's reply to his offer.

"But you're an officer."

"Therefore, I can relieve you—and remember, Mark, an officer who will not share the hardships of his men is unworthy to command them—Hark!"

At this moment, the revellers below broke into a rollicking chorus.

"Hark, how jovial they are," Lionel continued, observing the effect which the prospect of joining in the good cheer was producing upon his companion; "come, I'll let you off for an hour—but no longer, mind."

" You have no arms," observed Mark, beginning to waver, and looking wistfully towards the jovial circle round the camp-fire.

" Oh, never mind, lend me your pistols," Lionel replied, taking them from his belt—" what curious workmanship! where did you get them?"

" Never you mind; but they are curious things, a'int they?—not good for much, I should think."

" They will serve me for an hour well enough, I dare say," said Lionel, putting them in his belt—" and now be off, old fellow;" he resumed in as careless a voice as he could assume, " and the sooner you are gone, the sooner you will be back, for I don't want to stay here longer than I can help, I can tell you."

" But you'll give me an hour," said Wylde, getting up and preparing to descend.

" Yes, yes, good night; you'll be sure to return?"

" All right," said Mark, " and thank you."

" Make the most of your time."

" Ha! ha! ha! trust me for that;" and waving an adieu, the Filibuster turned an angle in the path and was gone.

Lionel could now give vent to his joy.

" It is done," he exclaimed. " Thank God, they are saved."

He sprang towards the hut, and was about to make his presence known to its inmates, when he heard a heavy step approaching. Mark Wylde had returned.

" I say, old chap," he said, halting and calling to Lionel.

" Well, what!"

" If the storm comes on, you can take shelter in the tent, you know."

"Can he suspect?" thought Lionel. "In the tent, did you say?"

"Yes, of course; it's warm and comfortable there."

"Have you entered it then?" Lionel exclaimed, aghast.

"Why not! I disturbed no one."

"Good Heavens! is not she—is not Gabrielle, I mean, within?"

"Lord bless you, no! The captain sent for her and the strange lady up to his quarters, two hours ago.. If they had been there, of course I should not have left my post; but as he does not seem inclined to send them back just yet—why—it don't so much matter; good night;" and he turned on his heel and passed out of sight.

Lionel flung aside the hanging of the tent. It was empty!

At first all consciousness deserted him, and burying his burning brow in his hands, he moaned aloud in helpless misery.

It was but for a few moments that he thus gave way. His senses were stunned; but as soon as they began to regain activity, he started from the ground, and with flashing eyes, and teeth set hard, strode away rapidly towards the ruins—clutching once again his trusty knife, and having the pistols which Wylde had given him, cocked ready for action in his belt.

He had not proceeded above a hundred paces when, at a sudden turn in the forest path, he came face to face with Emmeline. She uttered a faint cry, and turned and fled like a deer down the hill side. In vain he called after her, as loudly as he dared, to stay and return—that he was her friend—that he had come to save her. Terror appeared

to have given her wings, and the faster he followed the swifter she sped, the sound of his pursuing footsteps only serving to increase her flight, and to nerve her with strength to fly. At last, when she had reached the end of the beaten track, and was about to plunge into the impenetrable mazes of the forest, where it was inevitable that she must be lost, he saw a dark form glide from behind a rock and seize her. He dashed forward, and could barely restrain himself from felling her captor to the earth as he discovered that it was Gabrielle !

"How have you escaped ? Where is De Mortas ?" he demanded of her in eager tones.

"Stupified with drink, and the opiate I gave him. We escaped together, but lost each other in the darkness," she whispered.

"Nay, my poor child," she said, tenderly, to Emmeline, who had recoiled at Lionel's approach, "do not shrink from him ; he is your friend."

"Be assured of that, dear lady," said Lionel. "If your home is in yonder city, I am about to make my escape thither to-night ; let me bear you with me."

"Alas !" replied Emmeline, "I have no home. He who was murdered to-day, was not, as you have supposed, my father. *He* fell at the commencement of this unnatural war. Colonel Sartalli was his dearest friend ; he sought me, a poor orphan, in my helplessness, and was conducting me to share his home with his daughter, my earliest playmate, when—oh heavens, how shall I ever look her in the face again ! But for me he would have lived. I, I have been his murderer !" and she fell upon Gabrielle's neck in an agony of tears and sobbing.

"Know you by whose hand he fell ?" inquired Lionel.

"No, no," she replied, bitterly. "Go seek him amongst your comrades."

"Lady," said Lionel, sternly; "they are no comrades of mine. I abandon, disown them."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Emmeline, for the first time loosening her embrace of Gabrielle, and turning towards him, "that you do not belong to this band? Oh, do not deceive me!"

"No, lady, no," replied Gabrielle, quickly; "he is a prisoner, like yourself. Not a word," she whispered to Lionel, who was about to interpose, "or she will never trust you."

"O, thank Heaven!" Emmeline rejoined. "I can take your hand now without shuddering, there is no stain of blood upon it. I accept your protection, and bless God that He has not yet deserted me. But, oh, let us away at once from this fearful spot."

"Farewell," said Gabrielle, "I must leave you now, and take steps to prevent the discovery of your flight. Heaven bless you, Lionel, may you be happy."

"Mother, I will not leave you; you must accompany us."

"It may not be," she answered, sadly; "it is best as it is. Away, if you ever loved me; if you are discovered, I am lost. Away!" And waving one last adieu, she vanished.

"May I trust you?" said Emmeline sadly, gazing on Lionel's flushed and excited countenance.

"Lady, I am yours, to the last drop of my blood."

"Enough—I believe you. May God reward you!"

"Follow, then, quickly, this way; my horse is picketed at the corner of the abattis, and if I can once lead him outside, undetected, we are saved."

Again those heavenly eyes were upturned, and pouring the old flood of gratitude, now not unmixed with a tenderer emotion, into his own. He seized her hand, and imprinting one fervent kiss upon it, such as a devotee might have pressed upon a shrine, felt that a thousand deaths were to be braved for her love.

They reached the *chevaux-de-friese*, and already the uneasy trampling of the horses, disturbed by the unusual glare of the camp-fires and the noise of the revel, was heard, when they were surprised by a crashing amongst the bushes on the bank above the path; the boughs divided, and they had barely time to retire into the shadow of a huge forest oak, when Scriblerus Tinto, very much the worse for the potations he had been imbibing all the night, staggered down in front of the stockade opposite to where the horses were fastened for the night.

"Tol de rol de rol, tol de rol lol!" shouted the little photographer, in an unsteady voice; "that's your sort for a chorus, my boys!" Tol de rol de rol, tol de rol, ay—e! Excuse me, Sir," he hiccupped, addressing the shadow of a tree that fell across his path, mistaking it for a person—"You'll excuse me, sir—hic—but you're st-standing imy-way. I'm a g-going straightome, and y-you're st-standing straighti'theway—hic. No! I sh-shan't stanaoneside for you neither," he said, shaking his head obstinately, as a puff of wind caused the tree to waver; "if I turn—hic—out of the straight course, I shall losemyway—hic. I always like to walk straightome. What! you wo-won't move—won't you?—hic—then I s-s—hic—s-sit down here, and wait till you do. There!"

"Thank Heaven, the idiot is quiet at last," whispered

Lionel, leading Emmeline from their hiding-place. "We may pass him now. Hush! This way."

"Tol de rol de rol, tol de rol day—ay!" thundered Tinto, in drunken delight. "There!" this was addressed to the shadow, with a gesture of tipsy triumph, "beat that if you can!"

Our hero's resolve was taken in a moment. Motioning to Emmeline to retreat once more into their hiding-place, he advanced quickly up to Tinto.

"Stand, Sir, and give the countersign!" he exclaimed, in a gruff voice.

"Make him st—stan—a' one side—hic!" said Tinto, gazing vacantly up into Lionel's face, and waving his hand vaguely towards the shadow.

"Come! the pass-word, or I'll send a bullet through your skull!" and Lionel gave the little man a view down the barrel of one of his pistols, in unpleasant propinquity to his nose. Click, click, went the lock.

"Oh, Lord!" muttered Tinto, half sobered by the fright, "it's all over with me now!"

"Ha!" said Lionel, pretending to recognise him; "you are the fellow from Lara."

"Y—y—yes, Sir. Oh, don't! I wish I was back there again, out of the reach of these murdering villains," he moaned, rolling himself on his knees.

"You must go back instantly, or you are a dead man!"

"Oh, Lord! I'll go this moment," Tinto cried, springing to his feet.

"Do you know the road?"

"Yes."

"That is well," mused Lionel; "he shall guide us. I cannot trust you alone—you will be talking on your way,"

he continued aloud ; “ I must accompany you. Now, follow me, and lead out two horses to carry us on our journey. Be silent ; for if De Mortas finds you here—your pass expired at midnight—you will swing as a spy.”

“ Oh ! ” my dear friend, how shall I thank you enough ! ” said Tinto, now really sobered with the fright, and the prospect of escape. He had seen sights that day which made him resolve not to trust himself for another near the camp.

Following Lionel, he crept through the abattis, and obeying the orders given to him in an under-tone, he seized a branch, and, using it as a lever, slowly pushed aside the upper part of one of the felled trees that, as I have said, formed it ; whilst our hero did the same to the next in an opposite direction, until, after about ten minutes’ silent labour, they had made an opening wide enough for a horse to pass through.

To saddle Lionel’s own horse was an easy task ; the faithful animal knew him, and greeted his presence with a low whinney of delight. Not so with that which Tinto selected ; he plunged and snorted at the strange handling he met with, and it was with difficulty that Lionel appeased him at last. As it was, one of the Filibusters had been alarmed, and was approaching the spot.

“ Curse those horses ! ” he said ; “ they have broken loose, I believe.”

“ No, no ! ” shouted another after him ; “ never mind them—they’re all right ; they can’t get over the stockade, and the lake is on the other side ; they are all right. Leave them alone, and give us another song.” And the Filibuster, nothing loth, returned to the merry circle, just

as Lionel and Tinto had led their horses out into the open plain.

"Now, mount and forward," said Lionel, his voice for the first time betraying the emotion that he had felt all the night, as he swung Emmeline, who had joined them, on the saddle, and sprung into it before her.

"The lady!" exclaimed Tinto aghast.

"Not a word," Lionel whispered, again presenting his pistol; "but forward, slowly, silently! and if you turn out of the way, to the right or the left, or utter one sound again, you are a dead man."

And so they passed away into the darkness.

CHAPTER V.

THE FALL OF LARA.

THE sun had risen, and was shining brightly in the heavens, before De Mortas had slept off the effect of the opiate which Gabrielle had mingled with his wine. With dim eyes, and aching brain, he started from a heavy unrefreshing slumber, and still half stupefied, was gazing vaguely around him, trying to collect his scattered thoughts, when he was startled by the violent galloping of a horse, and the next moment a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Up, captain!" exclaimed the stranger, breathless with hard riding, and the haste with which he had dashed on foot through the ruins. "Up, and forward! There is not a moment to be lost. Walker is on the march for Lara; he will surprise the city to-night, and demands your support. A large force of the enemy is advancing,

and if we can only get possession of Lara before they arrive, we are safe; if not, all is lost! So to horse, captain, and forward!"

"Where is the general?"

"At the eastern extremity of the upper lake, twelve miles from this. He will await you there till mid-day, but you have no time to lose, for the roads are bad and the mountain streams are swollen with the rain, and in many places impassable," was the reply of the scout.

"You have ridden from thence?"

"Yes, and it has taken me three hours to come, unencumbered with arms and munitions; it will take you more than double that time."

De Mortas leaned his swimming head upon his hand, and rocked himself to and fro.

"Come, come, De Mortas!" exclaimed the emissary of General Walker, "shake off this lethargy, man, and be moving—what ails you?"

"I hardly know, my brain is all in a whirl."

"You have been making too free, and all your men likewise. I never saw such a dissipated looking set of scarecrows—why, there was not a single sentry on the watch as I rode up! You might have been surprised and cut to pieces a dozen times over."

"Not so—with the lake and your forces on our right, and the mountains in our rear, the only way of approach is by the south-east, and no one could advance from that direction without disturbing us, for I posted the most trustworthy of our band on yonder hill-side which commands the only approach."

"Then he must have deserted his post or slept upon it,"

replied the scout ; "for I saw with these eyes, as plainly as I now see you, two travellers riding in the very direction you have mentioned, and from the course they were pursuing it is quite evident to me that they must either have passed *through* your camp, or close by it."

"Say you so?" cried De Mortas, starting up; "I must inquire into this. Matteo!" he called, "Mat—ha!" he muttered, checking himself, "I had forgotten; send Mark Wyld to me, instantly." His command was addressed to one of a number of the band that had crowded round the hut of their leader, anxious to learn the tidings that the messenger from head-quarters had brought.

Mark was not long in making his appearance.

"You were on guard on the hill last night?"

"Until midnight, captain."

"Who relieved you then?"

"Master Lionel, captain."

"How dared you to leave without my permission?"

"You set me to watch Gabrielle and the lady, captain, and when you had sent for them away from the tent, I thought my duty was over."

"And so you deserted your post?"

"No, captain, I left my officer there, at his order; he gave me an hour's frolic in camp, and I returned to a moment, but he was gone."

"Gone!"

"Yes, captain, gone; and so has the little picture-taking man; we have searched high and low, and cannot find a trace of them."

"Yes, yes, we have!" exclaimed another of the band rushing into the hut, "they have taken two of the horses,

pushed aside part of the stockade and ridden away. I have seen the track of the horses' feet."

"What can this mean?" mused De Mortas, the gloom deepening upon his brow. "Ha!" he started as though the thought which flashed across his brain were a bullet which had struck it, "where is Gabrielle?"

"Here," she replied coming forward.

He seized her by the wrist and drew her aside, "Where is that girl?" he demanded, in a savage whisper.

"Escaped," was the calm reply.

"And by your connivance?"

"Yes!"

He flung her from him with a curse.

"Was there a lady with the travellers you saw?" he asked, returning flushed and trembling with fury to where the messenger stood.

"Now I think of it, I did see the flutter of something like a white dress."

"In which direction were they going?"

"Towards Lara."

"Then by G—I have them!" shouted the Filibuster, wild with triumph; "they are running into the trap—ha! ha! I have them! Mark Wylde, you never failed me before, so I pardon this your first act of insubordination; look to it well, that it is your last. I make you my lieutenant now. Break up the camp, sound to boot, and saddle; leave the stores and provisions to take care of themselves, there is plenty more in Lara. Let every man march as light as he can, for we shall have our work to do to be in time for the attack. Huzza!" he almost yelled, as the near prospect of fighting and plunder presented itself, "there will be warm work soon! Ride

back to the General" (this was to the scout), "and tell him from me to go on. I will be there as soon as he—away!"

* * * * *

In Lara all was peace and repose, as the golden rays of the descending sun assumed that burning glow which tells that the close of day is approaching. The authorities knew that an enemy had landed in their country, within fifty miles of their walls ; that a conflict had already taken place, and that their troops had been defeated ; but no effective steps appeared to have been taken for defending the town. There was no lack of arms of all descriptions and munitions of war in the arsenal ; but, enervated by that miserable spirit of procrastination which Spain has implanted, like a pestilence, in South America, there they suffered them to remain, and never had one volunteer been trained to their use—to-morrow would do—and to-morrow, and to-morrow ! But, as usual, "to-morrow" never came !

Affairs were in this state, and the cool hours of the day (in which it is safe in that tropical climate to leave the shelter of a roof) having set in, the inhabitants were amusing themselves walking or riding in the suburbs, or sitting in the open balconies of their houses enjoying the evening breeze, when two horsemen—their steeds bearing bleeding marks of stumbles amidst the mountain paths, themselves saturated to the skin by the torrents through which they had passed, the foremost bearing in his arms the half-fainting form of a young girl—staggered, rather than rode, down the main street towards the residence of the military governor.

" His Excellency could not possibly see any one at that time—he was enjoying his siesta," was the reply to the

eager application of Lionel (for the reader cannot have failed to divine who were the travellers) for an interview.

"Sir, I tell you it is a matter of life and death!" he urged vehemently.

The answer to this expostulation, given with the utmost gravity, was that His Excellency did not recognise any distinction in matters of business; they must all be transacted with his secretary before three o'clock, and due notice of what was required must be given the day before. "Consequently," continued the official, holding the door in his hand and preparing to close it upon the applicant, "you must come to-morrow."

"Fool!" ejaculated Lionel, fairly driven to desperation by this drivelling. "Stand aside! I must and will see him." With one vigorous thrust he swung the closing door half off its hinges, and sent the lackey reeling into the vestibule. Then, having half led, half carried Emmeline to a seat, he scattered, right and left, the wondering servants who had assembled, attracted by the noise of the altercation, and rushed forward towards the verandah where he expected to find the martial protector of Lara—asleep. He was not wrong in his calculations.

"What means this intrusion?" exclaimed the Governor. "Dominic—Carlos! Louis!" he shouted—calling to his servants, who had followed Lionel—"remove this fellow! why was he admitted?"

"Your Excellency, he forced his way in!"

"Then do you force his way out?"

"Hear me, Sir, I implore you—" Lionel pleaded, advancing—"the en——"

"Not a word," interrupted the Governor, "away with him. Some begging rascal!" he muttered to himself. Do you hear me? Away with him into the stre

In vain did Lionel try to make himself heard in the confusion that ensued. He was overpowered by numbers, a gag was thrust into his mouth, and he was being carried away, struggling in vain to give utterance to the tidings that, had not their delivery been delayed, might have saved the city, when Emmeline, alarmed at the absence of her protector and the sounds of the struggle, rushed into the verandah.

"Gracious Powers!" exclaimed the Governor, as she sprang towards him. "Signora de la Contara here, and alone? Where is my friend, where is Sartalli?"

"Dead!"

"Good God! how?"

"Murdered by the insurgents—the Filibusters. Oh, release him," she cried, perceiving Lionel's plight; "but for his aid I should have met with even a worse fate. Oh, release him, Sir, pray!" and with her own fingers she plucked at the hard knots in the cords with which they were binding our hero hand and foot.

"Unbind him—quick, quick!" exclaimed the Governor, now roused from his lethargy. "Pardon me, Sir, but really the plight you are in—"

"Was incurred," interrupted Lionel, glancing sternly from his torn and blood-stained habiliments to the now disconcerted functionary, "in hurrying over stream and crag to warn you of your danger."

"Danger?"

"Yes! danger, most imminent. The rebels, aided by Walker, the American adventurer, and his followers, are marching upon you—we encountered them not five miles from hence, and were chased by their patrols. In half an hour they will be at your gates. See! the head of the advancing column is already in sight."

It was too true! A cloud of dust, through which the

glimmering of arms was ever and anon apparent, arose upon the plain; and, borne upon the evening breeze, the hum and tramp of the approaching squadrons, hoarse words of command, and the lumbering of heavy artillery, became every moment more and more distinct.

It would be impossible to describe the scene of confusion that ensued. Martial Gompertz, the Governor of Lara, was a brave man; but what could be done by the bravest when hardly a gun was in position, and even if so, fit for service—when no officer knew his duty, or was ready at his post to learn it—when the dense population of the town, the male portion of which might have been trained into excellent auxiliaries, were rushing madly hither and thither, paralysing the efforts of the little garrison, and spreading the panic far and wide.

Enough! Let us draw the curtain over the scene that followed. A few shells thrown at the gate splintered it to atoms—a cheer—a rush—a fierce fusillade—then shouts of victory and despair—a dozen dropping shots, each followed by a shriek of agony—and all was over.

Lara was in possession of the enemy!

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST CHIME OF MIDNIGHT.

ONE of the last acts which Martial Gompertz performed ere he took his place in the breach and there died a soldier's death, was to place Emmeline under the roof of Colonel Sartalli's orphan daughter, where, fortunately, she was discovered by an aid-de-camp of General Alvari, the commander-in-chief of the insurgents, who, although a

rebel in arms against the constituted government of his country, and leagued with the desperadoes who had espoused their cause, was still a chivalrous and high-minded gentleman.

Lionel was not aware that his old companions were taking part in the assault; the order for them to advance was not, as we are aware, communicated until some hours after he had left their camp. He, therefore, supposed that he was fighting only against strangers, enemies to the country of his birth; but being taken in arms, encouraging and assisting the besieged, and claimed as a deserter by De Mortas, he was, without trial, condemned to death. He was to perish, by the rope, at daybreak!

During the brief interval afforded him for preparation for his dreadful and ignominious doom, he was lodged in a strong room of the citadel, the grated window of which looked out into the courtyard. Mark Wylde was appointed to be his gaoler, and strict were the instructions given to that worthy by De Mortas as he gave him his charge.

"He has tricked you once, Wylde; see that you never lose sight of him for a moment, until the scaffold has its due."

"I wish you would find some one else, captain," said Mark, sulkily; "this isn't a pleasant job—I tell you fairly, I like the lad, and am sorry for him."

"Sorry for him! when but for his treachery we should have surprised the place, and taken it without resistance—the blood of some of the bravest of your comrades is on his head—curse him!" ejaculated the Filibuster. "Obey my orders, and remain here; but, to make all secure, I shall take the keys myself—give them to me—and will return in half an hour." So saying, De Mortas locked

the massive door, and having secured the keys in his belt, went his way, leaving Wylde and our hero in the dungeon.

"Mark," said Lionel, after a painful pause, "have you forgiven me for the deception I practised upon you?"

"Don't say anything about it, Master Lionel; there was a woman in the case, I hear, and they play the very devil with a man when they once get a clutch round his heart."

"Mark—you will not refuse me one last request?"

"Impossible, boy. The captain has the keys in his belt. Why, I am as much a prisoner here as you are. I'm only put here to watch that you do not escape until—well, you know."

"Until I am led forth to die you would say;" replied Lionel in a solemn tone. "No—it is not to break your trust—it is not my liberty—that I am about to ask of you."

"You want me to communicate with some one without for you?"

"No."

"Then by G—," exclaimed Wylde; "if it is not either of these things, I'll do it, whatever it may be."

"Your hand upon it," exclaimed Lionel joyfully.

"There!" and Mark, who was at bottom a really good fellow, turned aside his head as his companion pressed his hand.

"Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks, old friend, you have removed a weight from my heart."

"Don't talk like that—what am I to do?"

"I am condemned to die a dog's death, Mark—by the rope—I have prayed De Mortas to give me, in return for the life I saved him, a soldier's death, and he has refused."

"The halter's a nasty thing," said Wylde with a shudder, loosening his cravat.

"I am to die at daybreak," Lionel continued; "you will be relieved ere then. Place yourself in the court-yard within musket shot of that window. At the last stroke of midnight I will stand here and place this lamp so—opposite my heart—do you understand me?"

"I think I do;" replied Wylde gazing sadly at the brave young fellow as he stood erect by the grated window, pointing to where he was to receive his death wound.

"You are an unerring marksman, fire—and let me die—kill me, but save me from the hangman!"

"I'll do it;" said Wylde, dashing away something from his cheek very like a tear. "I'll do it! I cannot save your life, my poor lad, but I'll take care that you lose it like a gentleman."

"Hush," said Lionel, placing his ear to the door, "some one approaches."

The key was turned; the door was thrown open, and De Mortas entered; but, not alone, he was followed by Emmeline.

"Emmeline!" cried Lionel, bounding forward to meet her; "this unlooked for joy—"

"Is but a brief one, and your last;" replied De Mortas. "My commander has granted you this last interview—not I. You have not an hour now to live—make the most of your time."

"You are ordered to leave us together," said Emmeline.

"And I will obey. Mark, you are now at liberty until the hour of execution. I will watch."

"Farewell boy—I cannot look you in the face, but give me your hand once more," said Wylde. "Farewell!"

"Farewell!" rejoined Lionel aloud; then added in a hurried whisper, "*remember, the last stroke of midnight!*"

Another grip of the hand and the words "trust me!" showed that he understood, and so he passed out followed by De Mortas. The heavy bolts of the door were again thrown and the lovers, for so they were, although no word of love as yet had passed, were left alone.

They had known each other for little more than one day, yet in that one day were crowded occurrences enough to make a whole life eventful. They had had but a few hours experience of each other's dispositions; but, perils shared and dangers braved together, had laid bare the very inmost recesses of the soul of each. Years of common place existence could not have taught them the lessons of that one night. Thus it was that, as Lionel folded her to his heart and imprinted his first kiss upon her brow, there was no need of words to explain what was passing in each breast.

"But, oh!" she exclaimed, extricating herself from his embrace, "not a moment is to be lost; that casement is but forty feet from the ground—here," drawing it from her bosom, "is a file to cut the bars; and here," unfastening the loose body of her dress, and uncoiling it from round her slender waist, "is a cord long enough, and slender as it appears, sufficiently strong to bear your weight."

"And yours, dearest; for I will never leave you?"

"No, no; I should only encumber your flight. Fear not for me. General Alvari has sworn to protect me from

De Mortas ; it was he who obtained for me this interview. He would save you if he could, but he dares not. Quick now, to the bars."

"Generous girl ! how can I ever repay this devotion ?" exclaimed Lionel.

"By instantly commencing the preparations for your escape. Oh, Lionel, every moment that I see you here—in the power of that villain—is torture. Oh, quick ! cut the bars, and let me assist you to descend."

Our hero required no further urging ; but having well lubricated the file with oil from his lamp, so as to make it bite silently, he began his work upon the bottom of the centre bar. The iron was old, and eaten into by the rust of years, and the file in his vigorous hands, bit deeply in ; and after about a quarter of an-hour of hard work—during which his excitement increased until he almost shouted with exultation at the success that was attending his efforts—came out at the other side, and the bar was divided.

"Huzza ! beloved one !" he whispered ; "one-half is accomplished—now for the upper end, and then—"

He sprang upon the ledge, and attacked the top of the bar lustily—too lustily—for at the very first stroke, the file broke off short, the useless handle remained in his grasp, and the greater part of the blade fell into the court below.

"Oh, Misery !" ejaculated Emmeline clasping her hands in an agony. "You are lost !"

"No, no, dear one ; not yet. I may be able to bend up the bar," and seizing it, he exerted all his strength to wrench it from its place, but it moved not. Poor Lionel ! He was worn out with the excitement and fatigues of the

two past days, and still weak through the loss of blood occasioned by his wound. But when man's strength failed, woman's ingenuity stepped in. Whilst he was labouring in vain, almost exhausted by the exertions he was making, Emmeline cast a rapid glance round the prison.

"I see!" she exclaimed, "I see!" and, springing to the opposite side, began to drag a heavy bench towards the casement.

"See—hold awhile! Thrust one end of this between the bars, and use the other as a lever—so—yes."

It was done in a moment; and with comparatively slight pressure, thus applied, the iron began to bend.

"It yields—it yields! Thank Heaven! Emmeline, you have saved me," cried Lionel. "Now then, to fasten the rope——"

But Lionel had scarcely taken it in his hand before heavy footsteps were heard echoing up the winding stairs.

"'Tis De Mortas!" whispered Emmeline, starting to the door, and listening. "Give me the rope—bend back the bar—so—that will do."

And in as short a space as suffices to write the words, the bar, weakened by once yielding, was thrust back in its place, and the rope concealed. The next instant the door was flung open, and De Mortas hurried forward into the dungeon.

"So, so!" he exclaimed, addressing Emmeline, "Gabrielle, I hear, has been with you before you entered here. I must search the prison. Ha, ha! a rope! Fool that I was to trust you. But your plot is foiled; the time allowed for you to remain alone with yon condemned traitor has expired, and I will remain with him here till I accompany him to the scaffold."

The first stroke of midnight boomed out solemnly into the still night.

" You are lost!" cried Emmeline, falling weeping on her lover's breast, " lost!"

Boom!—the second chime.

A desperate thought flashed through Lionel's mind as the *third* chime pealed forth.

" You may exult over me now, ungrateful villain," he said to De Mortas, who stood eyeing him with a fiendish smile; " but, had you been five minutes later, I should have been out of your power."

As he spoke, the *fourth* chime sounded.

" Say you so?" rejoined De Mortas. " By what means?"

" See!" and Lionel flung down the broken file.

The fifth chime!

" A file!" replied De Mortas, picking it up. " Your plan was well laid, then; though, like its instrument, it has failed."

The sixth chime!

The Filibuster returned to the door, and began to examine the bolt.

The seventh chime!

As he was doing so, the *eighth* and *ninth* chimes clanged from the tower!

" Fool!" exclaimed Lionel, " the door would but lead into the citadel; the *window* leads to liberty."

The tenth chime!

De Mortas cast a rapid glance towards the casement. In the dim light, all the bars appeared to be in their proper places.

" Ha! ha!" he laughed sardonically, " the bars have defied your efforts."

The *eleventh* chime !

"Not so ; one of them is half cut through. *Take the light and see.*"

The Filibuster seized the lamp, and, with it in his hand, began to examine the bars. As he leaned forward over the light to do so, the **TWELFTH** chime rang out—the report of a musket was heard—the lamp was shattered in his hand, and De Mortas fell shot through the body.

In the next instant Lionel seized the keys from his belt, and, assuming the fallen man's hat and cloak, lifted Emmeline in his arms, and bore her swiftly down the winding stairs, across the court-yard, and unchallenged—mistaken in the darkness for his quondam leader—gained the open street.

He made at once for the house of Constance Sartalli, and as he gave her friend (who had been so paralysed by terror at the sudden and unexpected fall of De Mortas as to be incapable of action) into her arms, the former was horrified at beholding her white dress dabbled with blood.

"My God ! Emmeline, you are wounded !"

"No, no ; but——"

One glance at Lionel's tottering form, and closing eyes, told all. The two girls were only able to break his fall, as he sank slowly from their arms.

His half-healed wound had been burst open afresh by the exertion he had undergone, and a broad crimson stain upon the floor, where he lay, told that his life-blood was ebbing fast away.

CHAPTER VII.

NEARER AND DEARER.

AT the commencement of this narrative I premised that I did not intend to become the chronicler of the Filibusters' campaign in Nicaragua. I have followed their fortunes only so far as the history of my hero is interwoven with them, and now their brief career is over. For the very night after that on which Lionel escaped with Emmeline from the citadel, the overwhelming force of the national army, of the approach of which the rebels had been warned, appeared before Lara, and the enemy finding that defence was hopeless evacuated the town, and being pursued by strong bodies of cavalry, fled, dispersed, and never rallied again.

We have had enough of camps and warfare, let me now take you—oh patient reader—into a peaceful home, and show you our two orphans, Constance and Emmeline, in safety and comfort, but with hearts yet chilled by sorrow. Six months after the occurrences described in the last chapter, Constance is trimming the flowers in her verandah, and Emmeline—her soft pale cheek resting upon her hand—is sitting apart, thinking. She has often sat thus lately.

"For ever busy with your flowers, darling," she observed, after a pause.

"Not now, Emmey; I am looking after something better worth attention. I am watching for Lionel."

"For Lionel!"

"Yes; he is to return to day. Ah, here he is! quick,

come here, quick—quick—there he is ! Oh, how bold and handsome he looks as he rides along !”

“ He does, indeed, thanks to your care,” said Emmeline.

“ Dear Lionel !” exclaimed Constance not heeding her, and still following the horseman with loving eyes.

“ Do you love him, then ?” asked Emmeline in a low, trembling voice, and turning her face aside.

“ Love him !” replied Constance turning from the verandah into the apartment. Lionel had now passed out of sight ; “ love him ! of course I do. Do not you ?”

“ I—I hardly know—that is—”

“ Why Emmey, why darling, what ails you ? you are faint, trembling, let me call for assistance ?”

“ No, no, no !” Emmeline exclaimed detaining her. “ I am well—quite well ; a passing spasm—no more. You love him, and he—he will love you—*does* love you ?”

“ Of course he does,” was the gaily uttered rejoinder, “ or he would be the most ungrateful fellow alive. Did I not watch day and night by his side whilst his wound was raging, whilst you—faintheart !—did nothing but cry and moan outside his door ? Nevertheless”—and Constance changed her tone into one of playful vexation—“ I am not at all sure whether he does not love you better than me, after all.”

“ Oh, no, no, no !”

“ But I say, yes, yes, yes ! and here he comes himself to judge between us,” Constance added as Lionel entered the room. “ Ah, truant ! you have come back at last, I am so glad to see you,” she cried, taking both his hands half crying with pleasure ; “ welcome, welcome home !”

“ Thanks, kindest friend ; but have you no welcome for me, Emmeline ?”

Poor Emmeline, pale and trembling, was trying to escape from the apartment.

"I have no home to welcome you to, Signor," she said.

"Why this altered tone?" inquired Lionel anxiously; "have I offended you, Emmeline?"

"She will offend *me* if she says she has no home as long as I live," said hearty Constance.

"Generous benefactor!" replied Emmeline kissing her hand."

"Nay, *sister*—sister Emmey. Oh! now I remember, Lionel, we were disputing when you came in—"

"Oh, silence, Constance, spare me, I pray," pleaded Emmeline flushing crimson.

"Nonsense; we were disputing, I say, which of us you love best; I say you like Emmey better than me, and it is a shame."

"Madam—I—I," stammered Lionel, now as confused as Emmeline had been a moment before.

"Madam! indeed," exclaimed Constance, "call me 'Madam' again, and I'll cut the question short by never speaking to you again. Now, listen to me," she continued, taking his arm, and also that of Emmeline. "Emmey and I have been sisters for a long time—such a long time—six weeks! and I intend now to adopt you as a brother from to-day; people say that I am rich, and what is the good of wealth if I cannot have a brother and sister, and every other luxury that I want?"

"You are generosity itself," said Lionel, pressing her hand reverently to his lips.

"Don't interrupt. We three will share all I have; and mind, Lionel, now I intend that you shall love your sisters dearly—better than any one else in the world. Why Em-

meline, what is the matter, are you going to faint again? and Lionel—why, I declare you are as pale as a ghost! Why don't either of you answer? Well, if you must consider it over, and be so stupid, I will give you time for reflection;” and the warm-hearted girl, willing to escape the expressions of gratitude that she feared would follow her generous offer, tripped merrily into the verandah and down into the garden below.

Emmeline sank into a chair, overcome with emotion, and buried her face in her hands; it was too true, she thought, “*She loves him!* Beat not so wildly, poor heart, you must forget him now for ever.”

Lionel approached her; but as he advanced, she rose hastily, and would have passed out, but he detained her.

“Emmeline,” he said, in a voice marked with sorrow, “I am a poor orphan, without a name, without fortune; but since the first night that I placed you under this roof, it has been a haven of refuge to me against the scorn of the world without. Be candid with me, Emmeline, our hearts were once open to each other; can it be that the scoff and the taunt have penetrated even here, and that you have become ashamed of the nameless adventurer?”

“Oh, Lionel, do not speak thus—leave me.”

“Not until I have spoken that which since first I saw your face was implanted in my bosom, and there has grown and ripened beneath your smile, till I can no longer keep it secret. Oh, Emmeline, I love you. You have often said I saved your life—give me that life to cherish and adore. Emmeline, do not shrink from me; I know that I am unworthy of you—but give me one word, one look, to bid me hope.”

“Lionel,” she replied turning quickly round upon him,

as though, for the moment, she had conquered some deep emotion ; "you possess the noblest heart that ever was offered to woman ; but no more of this, I beg, I insist—you do not know how you pain me by speaking to me of love. I esteem, honour you—you have my gratitude, but—"

"Not your love."

Emmeline drew herself up, and with a deep heart-drawn sigh, repeated his words—"No, Lionel—not my love."

"Enough!" he replied bitterly ; "my dream is over—would that I had never wakened from it ; but this is folly." He dashed the tear drops from his eyes as he spoke. "I know my doom, and will submit ; but, oh ! think if you, who lose no hope in this parting, are thus moved, what must *I* suffer?"

"Oh, Lionel reproach me not," Emmeline cried in a voice of agony.

"Reproach thee ! Oh, Emmeline, if I had the heart to do that, this hour would be stripped of half its misery. Emmeline, for the last time, *dear* Emmeline—farewell ! You bid me leave you—I will ; you tell me not to hope—I abandon it. But the love with which you have inspired me will endure for ever. Like a bright star it will illumine the night that from this moment closes upon my lonely life, and will set only in my grave ;" and not trusting himself to give even a parting glance at her who would have given worlds to have been able to recall him, he sprang into the verandah, and was gone.

In a few minutes afterwards Constance entered the room. She found her friend pale and trembling, but with a stern fixed look of determination upon her beautiful features that astonished her.

"Constance," she said, very quietly, "you must let me leave you."

"Leave me!" ejaculated her friend; "why, in Heaven's name?"

"Do not ask me."

"You do not love me, then?"

"Not love you! Oh, Constance, if you knew all—but," suddenly checking herself, "there is one thing I wished to ask you. You never had a brother?"

"You are right, and yet wrong. I had one, but he died before I was born."

"Indeed!"

"Yes," Constance continued, "his story is a sad one. Our house was attacked by Guerillas when he was about five years old. My father and mother fled, each supposing he was in the other's arms. The villains fired the house, and, ere his absence was discovered, he perished in the flames."

"Oh! horrible! Then you have never known a brother's love?"

"Never."

Search, then, well your heart, dear Constance, and ask yourself if the affection you feel towards Lionel be, indeed, a sister's love?"

"You terrify me!" exclaimed Constance. "Has, then, my conduct towards him been unmaidenly? Have I spoken a word that a loving sister might not address to a dear brother—that I might not say to my father's son, were he yet alive? Oh, Emmeline! tell me that I have not done so, or I shall die of shame;" and, she flung herself upon her friend's gentle bosom, and wept.

"No, dear one, you have not; but, as his bride—"

"*His* bride! Oh, blind Emmey, have you not seen that—that"—and Constance again hid her burning face—"that Carlo de Tarrantis, who rescued you from De Mortas here, loves me?"

"And do you love him?" Emmeline inquired eagerly.

"Oh! dearly—dearly."

"Oh! Heaven is indeed merciful," cried Emmeline, fervently clasping her hands; "thank God! thank God!"

"Why, darling, whence this emotion? Ha! I begin to see 'tis I who have been blind. Your emotion when Lionel returned—your desire to leave me—I see it all! Oh, noble girl, it is you who love him," Constance exclaimed.

"And I have broken his heart. He has gone—left me for ever."

"Not a bit of it—he is here."

And at this moment Lionel entered, accoutred for a journey.

"Well, Sir," said Constance, "Why are you booted and spurred at this time of day?"

"An affair of the greatest importance carries me away to St. Juan," he replied with a meaning glance towards Emmeline. "I could not leave without saying farewell to my *sisters*" (it was with difficulty that he pronounced the word). "I hoped to have found you alone."

"You have wished Emmey good-bye, then," was the sly rejoinder.

"I have."

"And must you go?"

"I must," he replied, choking down a sob; "I must, indeed."

"Oh, Emmey! Emmey!" Constance exclaimed, the

tears rising in her eyes, "if you are a woman, take him to your heart; how can you bear to see him suffer so?"

The next instant found the lovers locked in each other's arms, and Constance, alternately laughing and crying for joy, dancing around them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUN PICTURE.

THE course of true love now ran smooth, and the happy day fixed for the double marriage of our hero and Emmeline, Constance and Carlo de Tarrantis, dawned brightly upon Lara. Lionel had been appointed, soon after his recovery, to a post of high trust and emolument under the Government, and to his great joy obtained a clue that enabled him to discover poor Gabrielle whom he brought in triumph to his promised bride.

It was a happy meeting.

What had happened to De Mortas no one but Lionel knew. The last act of the rebels was to blow up the citadel in order to prevent the stores it contained from falling again into the possession of their enemy, and it was supposed that he was buried in its ruins.

The marriage bells are beginning to chime, the brides are in their chambers completing the mysteries of the toilette, and our old friend Scriblerus Tinto, who, under the patronage of Lionel, is driving a thriving business, is fidgetting about in the ante-room making preparations for taking their portraits. Tinto is a great authority upon all subjects connected with the rebellion, and is in ~~great~~ re-

quest at all festive gatherings as exhibitor of the sketches he took at the seat of war.

"Bless my heart, Mr. Tinto," said Constance Sartalli's attendant, Agnes, as she looked over his shoulder whilst he was arranging his materials; "are those black smudgey-looking things the sun pictures-people talk about so much?"

"Young woman," replied Tinto severely; "you have no soul for art. Those 'black smudgey-looking things,' as you call them, are the originals from which the *New York Penny Thunderbolt* copied all its magnificent illustrations of the rebellion. They are views of the country into which, as the editor very properly observed, 'our undaunted correspondent forced his heroic way, amidst the horrors of civil war.'"

"Lor! Mr. Tinto; did you do all that?" exclaimed the admiring waiting maid.

"Well, not exactly," replied the little photographer, descending from the high horse for a moment; "between you and I, I was only one day and night in the Filibusters' camp; but there was an old ruin, a village, and a forest near at hand, so I took twenty views of each from different points, and one or the other did very well for every place mentioned in the news. No one in New York knows the difference. It was much the safest way of doing business and saved travelling expenses."

"And what is this?" inquired Agnes, taking up one of the pictures.

"Oh!" Tinto replied snatching it from her hand; "that has no business to be here. I must put it away." So saying, he concealed it in the bottom of his box.

"There's my lady's bell. I dare say it is for me to tell

you she is ready. I'll be back in a moment ; " and Agnes tripped away.

" Nice little girl, that," Tinto mused, as her retreating figure skimmed along the corridor, " talking of photography ; there is a power almost equal to that of the sun for making impressions on sensitive substances, and that is the light of a pretty woman's eye. It strikes into your heart, leaves her picture there, and dang me ! if you can rub it out."

" Now, Mr. Tinto, we are all ready," said Agnes, returning ; and the little photographer, with his late gallant speech fresh upon his lips, passed into the presence of the brides.

The portraits were taken, and did the usual *in-justice* to the fair originals which all photographs perpetrate, and Lionel was left alone with his bride.

" We have but a few moments to call our own, now, sweet one," he said. " The guests will soon arrive ; have you no question to ask—no confidence to bid me share with you before our fates are linked in one for ever ? "

" No, dearest ! no, Lionel ! I ask nothing. You have been so open, so unreserved to your Emmeline, there is not a corner of your heart that she does not know."

" And which does not contain her image," replied Lionel, tenderly.

" Yet stay—there is one thing that I had long intended to ask you, but we have been so happy, that the horrible night to which it refers has almost passed from my memory. How did you become a prisoner in the camp of the Filibusters, Lionel ? "

" A prisoner ! " replied Lionel, confused, and flushing crimson."

"Yes; Gabrielle told me that they had captured you."

"Did she?"

"To be sure; but how changed your voice is!"

"Shall I confess to her," thought Lionel, "that I was one of the band? oh, no! she would hate me. Oh, Gabrielle, Gabrielle, why did you counsel me to this deceit?"

He had started from his seat and was rapidly pacing the saloon as these agitating thoughts filled his mind.

"Oh, Lionel, you are pale! you are ill!" exclaimed Emmeline; "your wound, perhaps."

"Nay, beloved, I am well! quite well! the remembrances of that fearful night, and the dangers you escaped, for a moment unmanned me. Do not let us think of them again," he added, quickly; "but look only to our happy future, Emmeline."

"A sky without a cloud!"

This generous confidence wounded her lover to the quick.

"Tell me, Emmeline," he said, taking her little trembling hand, and speaking in a grave low tone, "if I were ever accused to you of having once committed a crime, or of being nearly associated with those who had committed crimes, would you still love me?"

"Yes," replied Emmeline, her gentle eyes flashing with enthusiasm and love; "Yes, a thousand times yes, for it would be false—false as you are true."

It was not with unmixed rapture that Lionel pressed the confiding girl to his bosom. He had a secret concealed from her which he dared not reveal.

Constance now joined them, "Come, come, Emmey," she said, "you must not keep Lionel here, he must away and receive our guests. Why, darling! how pale you

look! take a turn in the fresh air in the verandah, to recover your bloom. ' Come, Sir,'—this was to Lionel—“ give me your arm, and thank your stars that you are not going to have me for a wife, as Emmey once intended you should.”

“ Nay, dear sister, my good fortune—”

“ Has saved you from that calamity. Come along;” and the high-spirited girl dragged him playfully from the room.

Emmeline took a seat in the verandah, and bared her brow to the fresh morning breeze. As she leaned back and closed her eyes, a flood of happy thoughts and hopes, full of joy, came tripping, like merry fairies, across her heart, and she felt that, if perfect bliss were attainable in this world, a life of it was opening before her. Thus, pleasantly musing, she was aroused by a sudden rustling amongst the shrubs, and the next moment a figure scarcely human—so foul, so wretched was its appearance—stood before her.

With hair and beard matted and discoloured; with face, pallid with pain and hunger, torn and bleeding by brambles; clothed only in a coarse red shirt, and canvass trousers torn and frayed up to the knees, the man staggered into the verandah, and, panting clung for support to one of its pillars.

“ Do not scream—do not faint!” he gasped, “ for I—have no—strength—left—to support—you.”

“ Wretched man, who are you?”

“ Look!” and he turned his face full upon her.

“ De Mortas!” exclaimed Emmeline too terrified to move.

“ The same! he who was shot the night that you and

your lover escaped from the citadel. The bullet is here, here," he muttered, hastily placing his hand upon his chest ; " it was not a large one, but it burns like a Hell within me, and gnaws, and gnaws, and gnaws away my life."

" Shall I summon assistance, for you ?" Emmeline asked, preparing to depart.

" No ; stay where you are !" exclaimed the Filibuster fiercely ; " no help can save me. I shall die, but not till I am revenged ; no, not till I have revenge."

" Oh, speak no so ; think of your past life, of your approaching end !". Emmeline urged solemnly.

" I *have* thought of it," replied De Mortas, " till it drives me mad. Don't preach to me, girl ; but listen ! you are to be married to day ? is it not so ?"

" In an hour Lionel will be my husband."

" *Never !*" almost shrieked the Filibuster, " never ! What he your husband and I here ! that would be strange ; ha ! ha ! ha ! Answer me this—who is he—who are his parents ?"

" Alas ! he never knew them."

" And you," continued De Mortas with a sneer, " a daughter of the oldest race in Nicaragua, stoop to an alliance with this—this base born !"

" If all the blue blood of proud Castile were united in one breast," replied Emmeline with enthusiasm, " it could not animate a nobler heart. Man, I *love him !* let that answer all your taunts."

De Mortas eyed her, with admiration in his gaze, as she stood before him with heaving bosom and flashing eyes, and, after a pause, *kissed* rather than said—

" Look upon me ; you know something about my history, but not all. Have you been ever told of Lorino the

Guerilla? I am he! You have heard, perhaps, of Captain Wolf, the Pirate? I am he, also! The murderer Forcas, too? Well, you see all three before you!"

Emmeline recoiled, uttering an exclamation of horror.

"Oh, I have had a charming life!" continued the villain; "fire, and sword, and pillages, and no quarter for man, woman, or child. No one can tell of me what I say of myself, for the dead tell no tales. At night, when I close my eyes, and try to sleep, a great sea comes rolling, and seething, and bubbling in my ears. It is hot, and heavy, and red. It is blood, girl, blood!"

"Why do you narrate to me those horrors?" cried Emmeline.

"Because," replied the Filibuster, seizing her by the wrist, "the more you learn of me, the more you will know of your future husband, for he was my companion—my comrade—my friend."

"It is false—false!"

"You saw him in my camp."

"Yes; but he was your prisoner."

"Did he tell you so?" demanded De Mortas eagerly.

"He did." Emmeline replied.

"He lied then—he was free. How else could he have escaped with you?"

A dreadful suspicion flashed upon the poor girl. She remembered her lover's hesitation and abrupt change of manner when she asked him to explain his presence with the Filibusters; then, his question—"would she love him if he were accused of crimes, *or of being nearly associated with those who had committed crimes?*" Can he have deceived me, she thought? then, turning to where the ruffian had sank into a seat she demanded, sternly—

"Dare you swear, in this your dying hour, that—say—that Lionel was your friend?"

"Aye," replied De Mortas; "and a good friend too, always ready to do my bidding and asked no questions. Ah, you may turn aside your head and tremble, you guess what is coming. You remember the old man—the father of her in whose house you now are—whom we captured with you. He and I had met before—he recognised and threatened to denounce me. I had only, ha, ha! to say the word, and my *friend* Lionel—my *dear* friend—killed him!"

He had not concluded the sentence when Emmeline flung up her arms in wild despair, and uttering a piercing scream fell prostrate to the ground. The next instant Lionel, followed by the alarmed guests, General Vedroni, the new Governor of Lara, amongst the number, rushed in.

"A robber!" exclaimed our hero; "quick," to an attendant—"my pistols! Emmeline, dear Emmeline," he cried, supporting her fainting form; "'tis I, Lionel."

But she repulsed his caress with a shudder.

"Seize that ruffian and call in the guard," said the Governor; "there may be more of them about—"

"You may save yourself the trouble, General," replied De Mortas; "I am a dying man, and alone."

Lionel instantly recognised his voice.

"De Mortas!" he exclaimed—

"No," said General Vedroni; "not De Mortas, but Lorino the noted Guerilla."

"Right, both of you," the Filibuster returned; "for the first time in your life you have me in your power. I shall cheat the scaffold, though, yet; but I will find some

one to take my place there before I die. Give me some brandy, some of you," he cried, turning fiercely upon the wonder-struck domestics; "don't you see I am sinking?" and he tore aside his shirt and disclosed a ghastly wound with a black circle of gangrene extending round it.

All shrank from him in disgust.

"Wretch, why do you pollute this happy home with your presence?" said the Governor.

"To do an act of justice," De Mortas replied staggering to his feet. "Where is the bridegroom?"

Lionel stood forward.

"Listen, all of you. I have not strength to repeat my words. Before you all, I denounce that man as the murderer of Colonel Sartalli."

"Of my father!" shrieked Constance.

At this instant Gabrielle entered the room.

"Ha!" De Mortas exclaimed, "You here?"

"Yes, villain!—to give the lie to your infamous accusation."

"No—no!" replied the dying man, with a sardonic smile, "to confirm it. Ask her, General, in whose band Lionel has served for the last five years?"

"Further disguise is impossible," said Gabrielle with a sigh. "He served with that man."

"Lionel, are you dumb?" exclaimed Constance crimson with indignation; "reply—refute this calumny."

"I cannot," answered Lionel. "I *did* serve under De Mortas as a soldier, in Mexico and this country, until I discovered that it was my native land; since then, I appeal to you all, have I been a traitor?"

"No! No! No!" was the enthusiastic and instant reply."

"I am guilty," Lionel continued, "of deceiving her who has been to me all truth; but it was to save her. An involuntary expression that escaped me, when she was in that villain's power, led her to suppose that I was not a member of his band. She trusted me, and we fled together. I won her love, and dared not undeceive her. This is my only crime. As for murdering Colonel Sartalli—I would have given my life to have saved him!"

"You hear him," cried Emmeline. "Oh! thank God he is innocent."

"Do *you* believe me to be so, Emmeline?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, yes."

"Then I care not. Gentlemen," Lionel resumed turning towards the assembled guests, "I swear that what this malefactor has accused me of is false. I am known well to many of you—judge between us."

"He has lied before," muttered De Mortas, now fast sinking, "and to her whom he pretends to love. Pshaw! believe him not."

"Silence," cried General Vedroni; "this strange charge cannot be believed unless you have some evidence to corroborate what you assert. Have you any?"

"I think so," replied De Mortas faintly. "You," addressing Lionel, "called just now for your pistols—produce them—no, not to me—hand them to that lady," indicating Constance.

"There must be some mistake," she said, as they were brought, "these are not Lionel's, they belonged to my dear father."

"Now," exclaimed De Mortas to Emmeline, excitement giving him new strength; "as Heaven is your judge, were

not those very pistols in the belt of your lover upon the night you fled together after the murder?"

"Alas! alas! they were."

"This is damning proof," said the Governor, in a tone of vexation. "Were you," to Gabrielle, "in the camp at the time?"

"No!"

"Then nothing can save him. Sir," continued the Governor, addressing Lionel, "I have a painful duty to perform; you must consider yourself a prisoner—let the guard be called in."

"Why what in the name of goodness is the meaning of all this disturbance?" inquired our little friend, Tinto, who had entered with the soldiers.

"Marm'selle Emmeline's bridegroom is accused of having murdered our lady's father on the day she met him first in the Filibusters' camp," replied one of the wonderstruck domestics.

"Ha!" Tinto exclaimed; "what was he like, describe him, somebody, quickly."

"There hangs his portrait," replied Constance checking her tears; "the curtain which hangs before it has not been removed since his death."

As she withdrew it, Gabrielle uttered a sharp cry.

"Powers of mercy, what do I behold! Lionel—look there—there—the picture—behold your father!"

"Then!" shrieked De Mortas, "he is a *parricide*!"

In the midst of an appalling silence, that followed this horrible announcement, Tinto dashed through the crowd—the box we saw him lately arranging in his hand—and, confronting the triumphant Filibuster, said very coolly—

"That's the last lie you told, *you* were the murderer!"

"The proof! the proof!" exclaimed the excited guests.

"Is here!" replied Tinto, placing a slip of glass in General Vedroni's hand.

"A photograph!"

"Yes," shouted the exultant little man—"a scene in the ruins that accidentally came into focus. I was taking a view of them deeming them deserted, when two men appeared struggling in the field of my lens. Only be quiet for one instant, said I, and I have you. They *did* pause for a moment, and—crack!—the thing was done. Look at those two faces—the handle of the knife in his hand," pointing to De Mortas; "the blade in his heart," pointing to the picture. I saw the blow struck, and there—there, by God's blessed light that cannot lie, it is recorded to condemn the guilty."

The shout of joy, of congratulation, of relief from pent up suspense that followed this announcement, and the declaration of General Vedroni that Lionel's innocence was proved, was only checked by the sound of a heavy fall. De Mortas had staggered forward, and attempted to seize the picture—tottered—reeled round, and fell—dead!

Such was the end of the Filibuster.

No marriage took place that day; but a week afterwards—when Emmeline and Constance had recovered from the shock they had sustained, and the necessary arrangements consequent upon Lionel being legally recognised as Colonel Sartalli's heir, had been made—two blushing brides became two happy wives, and more than that, remained so.

“GIVE A DOG A BAD NAME, AND ——”

CHAPTER I.

JUST AS THE TWIG IS BENT THE TREE'S INCLINED.

FLORENCE CLAVERING, tired and jaded after a gay London season, went down to Scarborough for quiet and sea-air. Stanley Thornton, for the same reasons, went to the same place. They met without design, and fell in love without reflection. They had nothing else to do.

Florence was a pretty, dancing, flirting, common-place girl ; Stanley a handsome, gay young fellow, with a great flow of spirits, and a small stock of brains. The course of true love with this interesting couple, passing, as it did, along a broad gauge of three per cents., through considerable landed property, was smooth, in defiance of the old proverb. When the announcement of their marriage appeared in the papers, the men cried out—“By Jove !” and the ladies—“*Indeed !*” They then proceeded to demonstrate that the fair one who ought really to have been Mrs. Thornton, was not Florence Clavering, and that the gentleman to whom that young lady should have sworn Love, Honour, and Obedience, was not Stanley Thornton. However, it was too late to mend the matter : the knot

had been tied—a bishop had sealed the matrimonial noose, and an Honourable and Reverend had finished off the ends. An eminent firm in Lincoln's Inn, assisted by a celebrated conveyancer in the Temple, had joined the landed estate and the three per cents. in legal wedlock, and there was an end of bachelor and spinster, as regarded their owners, for ever.

Florence Thornton became a mother before she was twenty. For some time she was very delicate—devoted herself to her boy, and the gay world knew her not. By and by she gained strength—thought less of her new responsibilities, and more of her old amusements. So the gay world found her again, and became all the gayer for the *rencontre*: for Florence suddenly discovered, after a month or two of incessant gaiety, that little Cecil was a cross, unloving child, who clung to the old nurse that tended and spoilt him, whilst he would have nothing to say to the beautiful mamma, who, between her engagements, sometimes honoured his nursery with her presence. Later on in his baby life, he pawed her silks with his bread and butter fingers, pulled at her feathers and flowers, and was otherwise objectionable. Occasionally he cried, or made a noise when mamma had a headache after a ball. So an extra green-baize door was placed in the passage leading to the nursery, and Mrs. Thornton, silks, feathers, finery, and headaches, remained undisturbed. It is wonderful how soon a passive victim to neglect is converted into an active object of aversion, and what admirable reasons can be adduced for avoiding the fulfilment of a duty, when a pleasure is in the perspective.

Very soon after their marriage, Stanley discovered that the society of Florence, his wife, did not quite compensate

for the abandoned pleasures of his club, his theatre, his lounge, and his balls ; whilst Florence found out that the companionship of her liege lord, was anything but an antidote to "*ennui*." They were too well bred and too indolent to quarrel, so they adopted the give and take system—so excellent in matrimony. Only in this way—they gave each other leave to take, they were both much too selfish to concede anything else.

Thus, Mrs. Thornton had her engagements, and Mr. Thornton his engagements ; and Mr. and Mrs Thornton their engagements, when neither was previously engaged. Years passed, and young Cecil Thornton was sent to school. His principal holidays began at the close of July, and ended in September. His father and mother were always abroad at this time, so that he either remained at school alone, or else was sent to the country house in charge of the housekeeper.

When he did join his parents, Cecil was found to be a rude, unmannered boy, with such low tastes and habits, that his mother could not endure him in the drawing-room. How could it be otherwise? He had had no motherly, gentle hand to form his disposition—no female society to elevate and purify his mind—his companions and friends had been grooms and gamekeepers ; his neglected, unloved youth had grown weeds, certainly, but what else had been sown ? He became a rude and ill-mannered youth. Whose fault was that ? His parents might have polished him up to their standard of refinement if they had chosen to have taken the trouble to do so ; but his little sister, five years younger than himself, was just then being tortured into a fashionable young lady, and the notion of her rough, boisterous brother being allowed to associate with her, was not

to be entertained for a moment. Moreover, the offender was tall and strong for his age, and his presence at home suggested certain chronological inferences highly distasteful to his lady mother's vanity. Cecil was sent, therefore, to Oxford, and suddenly, from a companionless, constrained boyhood, found himself transported into, what he considered, a manhood of glorious liberty and unbounded wealth.

It was the old, old story. He plunged into dissipation, and rose saturated and clogged with debt. He tried to shake it off, and only sunk deeper in the mire; then, finding struggling against it useless, he wallowed in it helplessly. There was no vice nor absurdity of which he was not guilty. His talents were of a very high class. Without exertion he won several prizes, and took honours in his examinations; but order and discipline he set at open defiance. At last he was rusticated for so long a term that his sentence was virtually one of expulsion from the University; only, without the harsh name; which, however, his angry relations did not scruple to attach to it.

His father paid his college debts, and died a month afterwards, leaving all his property to his wife, and an annuity of a hundred a-year to his son. Before that son was one-and-twenty, his mother had married again, and he was left without a home, without a guide, without a profession, to fight his own way in the battle of life, where he found at every turn relations and kindred, formed into squares with fixed bayonets to oppose him.

There was a girl who lived in a village near the country house, where Cecil had passed so large a portion of his boyhood, and who had been his companion during many an otherwise lonesome day. The old, old story again.

He loved her. It was by no means a desirable, even a reputable connexion, but he loved fondly and truly—consequently, honoured and respected her. But Cecil had a rival, the warmth of whose wooing was unrestrained by such considerations. After an absence of a few weeks, he learned that she had fallen, and that the man who had effected her ruin was his own step-father.

Was it not idle to talk to such a disposition as his of filial duty and respect after this?

I am not attempting to defend Cecil's conduct. I do not wish to cast reproach upon the dead. I have no dearer friend than Cecil Thornton, and it is only common justice to him to state his antecedents before telling his story.

CHAPTER II.

THE "LAMB" AND ITS COMPANY.

ABOUT fifteen miles from Brecon, upon a road leading to nowhere in particular, is a little wayside inn, called "The Lamb." If you are accustomed only to recognise an hostel in the dirty, uncomfortable dens which infect small provincial towns, you would pass by "The Lamb" without thinking that accommodation for man and horse could be obtained therein. The sign of "The Lamb" hangs, in a very unpretending manner, from a tree on the opposite side of the road, and is hardly perceptible in the summer time, for the thick foliage which surrounds it; the honeysuckle, too, which twines round the porch, quite overgrows the board above the door, upon which is painted the information that coffee, tobacco, and snuff might be



drunk on the premises—a slight error in composition, to be accounted for by the fact that the limner had been paid in advance for his work, and had left a considerable portion of his earnings and his wits in the bar-parlour before he commenced his labours.

From all this let it not be supposed that the "Lamb" was not a busy "Lamb" and prosperous in his generation. He had company of his own that never failed him, and that knew their way to his threshold blindfold—who played bowls on his lawn and skittles in his alley, or smoked pipes and drank "whiskies" in his chimney corner by themselves and their forefathers, day after day, and night after night, from a time whereof the memory of the "Lamb" runneth not to the contrary. Moreover, there was a famous trout stream hard by; and the "Lamb" was, of course, the "house of call" for those who came to fish. Now, your genuine fisherman is generally a bachelor—sometimes an old bachelor, always a fidgetty bachelor, and a bachelor particular as to what he eats and drinks. The "Lamb," therefore, like all places of resort for this species of "homo," had a simple mode of cooking simple things, which is not understood, Madame, in your "cuisine;" nor to be obtained, Sir, at your club. Incredible as it may appear in these times, the bread of the "Lamb" was made of wheaten flour, and the beer of the "Lamb" was brewed from malt and hops. If you wished for a bottle of wine, the "Lamb" could produce one in prime condition, and for a moderate price, which would neither make you a murderer nor a maniac, whatever Messrs. Samuel Pope and George Cruikshank might say to the contrary.

Mrs. Morgan, the mistress of the "Lamb," was always tidy, cheerful, and good-looking. She could cook you a

chop or a steak, and fry you a trout, to the twentieth part of a turn. Had you set Soyer against her to boil a potato for the one, or to melt the butter for the other—even giving him the run of the "Lamb" for his ingredients—where would he have been? *Nowhere*—emphatically *nowhere!*

One fine summer afternoon, a stranger took up his quarters at the "Lamb," and a good deal of excitement amongst its frequenters was the result. In the first place, nobody knew who he was, and whence he came. He did not belong to the fishing, bowling, or skittle clubs; and was neither known to, nor introduced by, any member of those fraternities. He asked for a bed for one night, and had already stayed a week. He was out all day, and remained in his room all night. At last, after due deliberation, it was settled by the cronies of the chimney-corner before mentioned, in full conclave—

Firstly. That his name was Cecil Thornton, and that he "was something to do with London."

Secondly. That he was a real gentleman, albeit he had no other luggage than a knapsack and a fishing-rod.

* * * * *

"Well, Sir, and what sport to-day?" said Mrs. Morgan one evening to her new guest, as he was hanging up his fishing-rod under the eaves of the house.

"Very bad, Mrs. Morgan," was the reply. "Nothing to speak of—the wind was dead against me—only two brace, you see; and very small."

"Indeed, Sir! Why, my little lad was out not above two hours, and he has brought home as fine a basket of trout as one would wish to see."

"Oh! but Willie, though a small boy, is a great fisher-



man, you know, Mrs. Morgan, and quite takes the shine out of a poor cockney like me," said the stranger. "By-the-by, can I have my room a day or two longer? I don't think I shall leave to-morrow, after all."

"That you can, Mr. Thornton, and with pleasure, Sir," said the buxom landlady. "I was only just saying how sorry——;" but the sorrows of his worthy hostess were lost upon Thornton, for he had entered the little inn, and was leisurely divesting himself of his fishing gear in the kitchen.

* * * * *

"Is there anything else that I can do for you?" said Mrs. Morgan, clearing away the remains of Thornton's dinner the same evening, about an hour after the above conversation.

"Nothing, thank you," replied Thornton; and yet, if you could spare me a few moments—sit down, pray—to tell me something about this beautiful country, I shoud thank you."

Mrs. Morgan seated herself.

"I went somewhat higher up the stream to-day than I had before been," her guest resumed, "and came to a large house, in a park, upon the hill, to the right. Can you tell me who lives there?"

"Oh, yes, Sir—'Squire Glamour; he lives in London mostly, but he has not gone this year, on account of his lady's health; so you see Miss Fanny—but la! how I do run on, to be sure. How are you to know who Miss Fanny is till I tell you?"

"His daughter, I presume," said Thornton.

"Lor' bless you, Sir! Miss Fancy—we called her Fancy, bless her heart—is his niece, and as fine a young lady as

you would see in a day's march ; why, I nursed her, Sir ; for fifteen years my good man was her father's soldier servant—poor Colonel Glamour, Sir, as was killed in the Affghan war."

" And her mother ?"

" Dead, Sir !—dead, too—of a broken heart—nothing else. My Fanny is an orphan, though I'm sure I feel like another mother towards her."

" Poor child ! one can tell that her story is a painful one by the sad expression of her face," observed Thornton, musingly.

" Sad expression ?—why, Sir, Miss Fanny is as gay as a bird—her sweet, merry heart runs over with smiles and pleasant words. Miss Fanny sad ! Lor, Sir ! I never saw her sad, and I've been fifteen years, besides—"

" Miss Fanny, then, as you call her, is fair ?" suggested Cecil.

" Fair as a lily, Sir, and as sweet. She will be nineteen come the 23rd March next, please God."

" Then who is her dark, pensive companion ?"

" Oh, that's Mr. Glamour's own daughter," replied Mrs. Morgan—" a dear child, Sir, but nothing to compare with my Fanny. You've met the young ladies, then, Sir ?"

" I saw two ladies by the stream ; and I conclude, from your description, that they were Miss Glamour and her cousin. But hark ! I fear that I am monopolising your society too much, Mrs. Morgan ; I hear loud appeals to you from below."

" Thank you, Sir"—" coming, coming !" " Then you won't leave us to-morrow, Sir ?"

" No, I must stay a day or two longer ; fresh air is not to be had every day."

"Good evening, then, Sir."

"Good evening, Mrs. Morgan."

And the good-natured bustling mistress of the "Lamb" forthwith took her departure.

Thornton filled a very black pipe with very strong tobacco, lighted it carefully, and smoked it slowly, studiously exhibiting all that care and tenderness towards it which very short and dirty clay-pipes appear to demand—gazing at it fondly when the oil began to ooze through the stem, and polishing it lovingly upon the sleeve of his ragged shooting-jacket—puffing, ever and anon, long thin volumes of smoke through the fragrant woodbine that laced the windows, and watching the thin, blue wreaths as they curled slowly away, and were lost in the twilight. But, after all, when night set in, and the stars were shining, when his cherished pipe went out, and, falling from his relaxed lips, lay broken to pieces upon the stones below, he did not alter his position, but stood gazing on, through the clustering woodbine, into the thoughtful twilight—thinking—thinking—thinking.

* * * * *

Breakfast is an important ceremony in a country-house. It is more than an ordinary occasion for eating and drinking: letters are received—newspapers arrive—and the plans for the remainder of the day are brought forward, discussed, and settled. A pile of correspondence lay upon Mr. Glamour's plate as he entered the breakfast-room with his daughter and niece the day after Cecil Thornton had broken his pipe.

"Humph! what a fool the man must think me," said Mr. Glamour, as he glanced over the contents of the various epistles. "Ha! ha! let them abuse me—it's

their trade—who cares? Poor fellow, I cannot help him, though—I've no interest with such a set of —— Ah —"

"Now, uncle, do put aside those stupid letters," said his pretty niece, "and take your breakfast; it's getting quite cold. Come."

"If you are not quiet, Fanny, I won't tell you what this is about," said her uncle.

"Why, it's the General's handwriting!" exclaimed she, trying to seize the letter.

"Yes! it is, Miss Impudence; he wants to borrow some womankind, he says; so, girls, will you go over to H—— next week?"

"Oh, of course," said both young ladies in a breath.

"He says he has to patronise some play-acting fellows, and wants some people to look pretty in the theatre, and amuse him, and that you girls will do for want of something better."

"The General" was Mr. Glamour's younger brother, a retired officer of the East India Company's Service—a jolly old bachelor of ample fortune, whose chief objects in life appeared to be to spoil his pretty nieces, and to give a helping hand to all sorts of struggling people who fell in his way. The kindly old man had had a hard struggle with life himself once upon a time, and knew the value to the recipient of an encouraging word, or an opportunity for winning it, boons which costs the donor nothing. I think we should none of us be any the poorer, and that this world of ours would be all the happier, were more of us to follow the generous old soldier's example.

"By-the-by, uncle," inquired Fanny Glamour, as soon as the preliminaries of the visit to H—— had been

settled, "have you given anybody leave to fish on our side of the river in the park?"

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Glamour emphatically.

"Well, there was a man fishing there, yesterday; was not there, Ada?"

"I don't think he was fishing, dear," replied Ada; "at least, I did not see him throw his line once."

"He was trespassing, at any rate," said Mr. Glamour.

"No one hereabout would take such a liberty, I should suppose; he must be a stranger."

"No doubt," said Ada; "from what I can judge, he is not a person who would wittingly offend. Whatever else he may be, he is a gentleman."

"Oh! oh!" said Mr. Glamour, putting down his knife and fork and lifting his eyebrows, "Has he, then, made your acquaintance?"

"It is precisely because he did not attempt to do so, under circumstances, which a less well-bred person, might have taken advantage of, that I venture to think, papa dear, that he is what I said—a gentleman," replied his daughter.

"Well! but what circumstances? What circumstances? What happened?" inquired Mr. Glamour, becoming somewhat excited.

"Oh, nothing that need give you the smallest annoyance. Fanny and I were sketching on the rocks, just above the second fall, and my book accidentally fell into the river below. This person thereupon waded into the stream, got it out, and returned it to me without a word."

"Perhaps the fellow was only stupid," observed the 'Squire continuing his breakfast, "and didn't know what to say."

"I dare say you are both right," said Fanny, "he may be very gentlemanly and very stupid likewise—two things by no means incompatible. But what can it matter. Let's talk of something else."

"With all my heart," said Ada, laughing.

CHAPTER III.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

GENERAL GLAMOUR'S "play-acting fellows" were the company of Mr. Lawson, the manager of the "South Western Theatrical Circuit," for whose benefit the performance at H——, "under the distinguished patronage of that respected friend of the drama," was to take place, "upon which occasion the celebrated Tragedian, Mr. Monckton, would appear in Shakespeare's play of 'Othello.'" This important information was impressed upon the "nobility and gentry" of H—— by huge posters of resplendent hue, pasted on every available blank wall in the town. Wonderful bills were these posters! it made you wink to look at them. Every line appeared in a different colour and type, whilst the great name of "Monckton" blazed forth in the middle, like the centre of a firework. They were marvellous bills, full of pretension, and breathing defiance to all competing establishments. A striking contrast to them was the little old man who assisted in sticking them up, distributing also abstracts of their contents to the shopkeepers for exposure in their windows. He was about sixty years of age, and wore an old frock-coat buttoned up with suspicious closeness to his chin, where it was met by what had once been a very gay blue satin

stock, now sadly faded, and ragged round the edges. His trousers were of seedy black, exceedingly luminous at the knees, and several inches too long for the poor shrunk shanks they encased. A well-brushed hat was set jauntily upon the top of a decidedly theatrical wig, and a pair of old shrivelled black gloves, a great deal more than covered his hands. It was a kind, gentle face, that old man's ; marked deeply by something rougher than Time ; but it wore to-day a smile, and there was in his step a lightness, that had not appeared there for many a year. And why ? Because upon the bills which he was anxiously having placed in the most conspicuous part of the shop-windows was printed in large capitals—

OTHELLO.....MR. MONCTON.

DESDEMONA (first time).....MISS DAVIS.

Lily Davis was his motherless and only child !

Poor Lily ! had any one told her a month ago that she would ever be called upon to perform the principal female part in a tragedy, she would have smiled at the ridiculous notion. A servant girl in a farce, a fairy in a pantomime, pages, guests, and village maidens, who were to look pretty and hold their tongues, were Lily's *rôles*, until one day by accident Monckton heard her reading Tennyson to her father ; he made no comment, but a day or two afterwards, happening to arrive at the theatre a little before the time fixed for rehearsal, he asked her to read over to him some lines that were to be spoken by the lady engaged to act with him that night. Lily began with perfect indifference, merely, as she thought, to oblige one who in many little things had been kind to her ; but as she proceeded, her mind absorbed the poetry, she realised the intonations, and *felt* every word she uttered. The result

was, a genuine and unconventional conception of the part. Monckton was astonished ; said nothing ; but thanked her for her assistance.

After rehearsal, he sought the Manager in his sanctum.

" You wish me to play 'Othello' for your benefit at H——, I believe, Mr. Lawson," said Monckton.

" Why, yes, Sir, if perfectly agreeable to you, it is my intention to put up that admirable tragedy upon the occasion you have named," replied the Manager, majestically.

" Whom do you intend to cast as 'Desdemona ?'"

" There is but one person in my present company, Mr. Monckton, capable of enacting to my satisfaction, and that of the public (whom it has always been my humble endeavour to please), the beautiful character described by our great bard as the 'gentle Desdemona.' "

" And that is?"—inquired Monckton.

The Manager was surprised at the question ; he drew himself up to his full height (five feet two), placed one hand within his waistcoat, and prepared the air by a flourish with the other for the coming announcement—
" Mrs. Lawson, Sir !"

Monckton's handsome lip curled slightly.

" Now, Lawson," he said, " listen to me like a reasonable man, as I dare say you can be sometimes."

The Manager bowed benignly.

" Mrs. Lawson, I have every reason to believe, is a very excellent wife, and the exemplary mother of a very large family."

The Manager winced.

" She is also—which is more to the purpose—a very fair actress in an extensive range of parts, but she has

come to a time of life, and acquired a certain dignity, let us call it, of figure, which seems to me absolutely to forbid her attempting such characters as 'Desdemona.' 'Desdemona' was not a portly matron, she came to an untimely death in her youth, and, consequently, could not have had a son big enough to play Roderigo. I really think that if Mrs. Lawson consulted her own good sense she would much prefer playing 'Emilia'—a part so much better suited to her talents, and, if I may venture to say so, her years."

The Manager was dreadfully perplexed. He saw clearly the force of what Monckton had urged; but Managers' wives of a certain age, good reader, you must know, always insist upon playing the most juvenile characters upon the stage. What was to be done? "I know very well, Sir," said Lawson, "that my wife is not fitted to *look* the part, but," added he ruefully, "who is to tell her so?"

"I will," said Monckton.

Mr. Lawson's face brightened. It was quite evident who managed the Manager.

"Then that is settled," he proceeded, "and Miss Mortimer shall be noticed for 'Desdemona.'"

"Miss Mortimer!" exclaimed Monckton. "Miss Mortimer has no more idea of poetry and feeling, than"—than you have, he was about to add, but checked himself, and substituted—"a post."

"But there is no one else, Mr. Monckton."

"Pardon me, there is. If I am to play 'Othello,' I must request you to cast Miss Davis as 'Desdemona.'"

"Miss Davis! Sir," replied the astonished Manager, "why she has never spoken ten lines on the stage."

"Quite time that she should undertake more."

"But Miss Mortimer ——"

"Must be told to mind her own business."

"But, suppose this little girl should fail?"

"She will not."

"Well, Mr. Monckton, will you undertake ——"

"Mr. Lawson, you know my position here, and that I have never, till now, interfered with any of your arrangements. I ask this as a favour, and I tell you candidly, that I expect you to grant it. Miss Davis has every quality to make a successful actress, and only requires an opportunity to become one. This you must give her."

"Well, Sir, really as you seem to have taken such a fancy to the girl," proceeded the Manager, with a leer——

"Another such insinuation, Sir," said Monckton, sternly, "and we part at once. I have discovered—no matter how—a spark of talent that you have overlooked, and perhaps might never have recognised. I give you an opportunity of fostering it for your own benefit—not mine. Take it or not, as you please, but understand that I do not play 'Othello' with any one but Miss Davis—good morning."

Managers of theatres are autocrats, and do not generally stand such language as this from those under their control, but Monckton was not under Mr. Lawson's control, nor anybody else's—not even under his own.

I have now accounted for the smile upon the old bill-sticker's haggard face.

I am bound to say that Mrs. Lawson took her de-thronement much better than might have been expected. Monckton had a quiet, firm way of putting things, and she was a kind, motherly woman. She did not mind re-

signing her part as 'Desdemona,' to give poor Lily a chance, but would have been torn to pieces by wild horses before she would have let Miss Mortimer have it.

The evening of General Glamour's "bespeak" arrived, and it was an anxious moment for Lily when the last din of the orchestra died away and the curtain rolled up. She knew that the ordeal through which she was about to pass would make or mar her for ever. If she failed, she would lose even the poor engagement that she had, for how could she endure the sneers and taunts of the jealous Miss Mortimer and her friends? Shall I offend unpardonably, my dear Madam, if I suggest that your sex—who, if you please, can make any place, however humble, a paradise—can be equally successful in producing the unpleasantness peculiar to a spot in a contrary direction, if you take it into your heads to try. We have a little experience, I think, in this world that we live in, of your capabilities in both ways, and let me tell you—who, of course, know nothing about such dreadful places—that there is quite as much envy, hatred, and malice—quite as much jealously and backbiting—quite as much scheming and plotting behind the scenes of theatres, as may be found in many a drawing-room and library you and I wot of. Yet, believe me, also, if you can (so repugnant to all the prejudices of well-regulated minds is the statement I am about to make), that all the goodness, virtue, and charity extant are not on your side of the curtain. The foot-lights shine sometimes upon honourable men and virtuous women, and oh! upon how many weary, hopeless, aye, and unselfish drudges. Do not let us be too hard upon these poor players, then, nor fling so many stones at them, lest, perchance, some day, a few of those missiles might re-

bound into the private boxes and stalls, and do irreparable mischief.

The play has begun, and Lily is standing at the wing, book in hand, ready to go on the stage when the cue shall be given. As the time draws near, a sickening dread steals over her—her eyes grow dim, and her knees tremble. The stage seems to heave up and down slowly like a ship in a storm—the scenery dances about grotesquely—somebody is speaking, but there is such a singing in her ears that she cannot make out a syllable; she knows that somebody is doing something, but a cloud of dust and a blaze of light blind her—she can see nothing. The call-boy shrieks, "Now, then, Miss Davis!" She hears this, and her first impulse is to faint—her next to run away and hide. She does not remember one word of her part, and has forgotten all about the cue. The book of the play falls from her hand—the stage plunges about more tempestuously than ever—the side scenes waltz more wildly than before—the noise, and dust, and glare, have increased twenty-fold, till, when she is almost sinking to the ground with terror and excitement, some one comes up rapidly, pushes her with much gentleness, but firmly, towards the stage. There is a great flash of light—a faint cheer—a sob, a gulp, and it is all over. *She's on.* Desdemona is before the Senate.

CHAPTER IV.

PATRONISING THE DRAMA.

OUR Lily being "on," let us find a place, if we can, in the dress circle, where General Glamour, his brother, his two pretty nieces, and a host of friends are assembled to see the performance. The first scene has passed quietly



enough. Mr. Lawson, as Iago, appears to consider that the sooner he takes the audience into his confidence and declares himself a villain, the sooner will his villainy be appreciated. Acting up to this principle, his dress, manner, and general conduct are such as would ensure him instant dismissal from his post by the very dullest General that ever wielded a bâton. He is a low, transparent scoundrel, is "mine Ancient," in the hands of Mr. Lawson, yet strictly conventional and theatrically correct, as Iagos go, notwithstanding. Monckton was well received, obtained much applause, and what's more, deserved it. Like a sensible fellow, he considered that a Moor need not be a Black-a-moor, and therefore did not colour his face to the hue of an Ethiopian Serenader. The play of his fine expressive features, consequently, was not entirely lost.

He delivered the noble address to the Senate admirably. At its close, when he advanced to the front of the stage, amidst the plaudits of the audience, his eye caught that of Ada Glamour. Both started, and Monckton for a moment lost all presence of mind, and stood spell-bound. The audience thought he was overcome by their loud tribute of admiration, and applauded him again to the echo. He never had acted one quarter as well as he did that night, and he never acted again.

From the first moment that Lily Davis set her foot on the stage that evening, her success was decided. Her youth and pretty face predisposed people in her favour, whilst her soft unaffected voice—for not having studied elocution under the best masters, she was content to use only the tones that nature had given her—her sweet young voice, I say, went straight to the hearts of all who had hearts for it to go to. Now, I am not speaking of a heart

in an anatomical sense, as of a machine for pumping blood, which we all carry about with us under our waistcoat. I am taking a less practical view of it—as of the abode of kindly thoughts and gentle emotions. I believe it is considered very absurd to cry at the fictitious sorrows of heroes and heroines. My young friend Sabretache, of the Heavies, would sacrifice even his incipient moustache rather than be seen with a tear upon his cheek at the theatre; but I do not know if he will ever be a more manly fellow than that yokel who is blubbering away down yonder in the pit. I know that *I* have blubbered at the play, and seen many a right down good fellow do the same; nor shall I be ashamed of my grandchildren, if I am ever blessed with any, seeing me guilty of such a solecism in good manners.

With the exception of the managerial Iago, the tragedy was very creditably performed, and the hearty old General was highly pleased with his "play-acting fellow."

"Well, Miss Fan," he said, as they were rolling smoothly home in the comfortable chariot—(Fan was his favourite, for she plagued him most)—"what did you think of the play?"

"I liked it very much, dear uncle. I declare I'm quite in love with that Mr. Monckton. I think his pretty little Desdemona was quite right to elope with him. Don't you think so, Ada?"

But Ada had a headache, and was not communicative.

When the cousins had retired to their room, and begun to remove their finery, and to compare notes upon things in general, as I am informed and believe young ladies always do during the performance of those mystic rites that take place between the time that they go up to bed

and the time that they go to sleep, Ada, who had no secret from her cousin, told her that she was perfectly convinced that the stranger who had picked her sketch-book out of the river and Mr. Monckton, the tragedian, were one and the same person. She had recognised him, and more than that, he had recognised her.

"Then he is not a Prince in disguise, dear, after all," said Fanny.

"Not a *Prince*, certainly," was the reply.

There was not a single individual in Mr. Lawson's company, from the manager himself down to the call-boy, who could make out what manner of man was Monckton. He was unpresumingly gracious to them all. He had a nod and a smile, and a word of greeting for the least of them; but his manner was so different from theirs—its very easiness made them feel restraint, and its quiet firmness planted a barrier between him and them that the most forward could not break down or creep under. Even Miss Mortimer failed to advance in his regard and confidence one inch further than the point to which she had been admitted at the commencement of the first half-hour of their stage acquaintance. Miss Mortimer was not a person to be easily baffled when once she had determined to gain a point. It would have been absurd to have accused Monckton of haughtiness; for he was far more civil and considerate to the subordinates of the theatre than any other person in it; indeed, he was courtesy itself. When people were too familiar, he did not understand them; if impertinent, he did not hear them. He would say things to any one who presumed upon him that would make the offender wince as though he had been cut with a knife, and all this with a slow,

quiet voice, without a hint or even gesture of anger. His wonderful self-possession was the secret of his success as an actor on and off the stage. You could not look him in the face very long ; but were you to gaze for a month you would never discover what was passing in his mind.

His interference in behalf of Lily Davis naturally gave rise to a great deal of surmise and talk in the theatre, for it was very soon known that it was owing to his influence that she had been raised from her subordinate position. Had Lily failed, malice and slander would have been busy ; but people on the stage are as wise in some things as their betters off it, and know when to truckle to a rising star. No one congratulated Lily more warmly than Miss Mortimer, and no one hated her more bitterly. She had supplanted this ambitious lady in two things which she had set her heart on gaining—the lead upon the stage, and the regard of Monckton. Both were Lily's—both ought to have been hers. It was bad enough not to gain them when there was no rival in the field ; but to see a mere child, whom she had treated as an inferior, in the enjoyment of the coveted position, and of (as she thought) the love of the man she worshipped with all the fire of her fierce fiery nature, was too much for her. Monckton should see if her hate were as easily turned aside as her despised love. She vowed that she would have a bitter revenge upon him for the wrong he had done her ; and she kept her word.

Old Davis, who had been behaving in the most insane manner whilst Lily was upon the stage, on that eventful night, was nearly wild with joy. He hugged his pretty daughter till she shrieked for mercy ; he danced, he sung, and—I am sorry to be obliged to record it—got uproari-

ously tipsy, drinking long life and a brilliant career to the successful "debutante." The next morning, accompanied by his daughter, he called at Monckton's lodgings, and, with the tears in his eyes, thanked him for all that he had done. "We have struggled hard, Sir," he said, "and I have seen much sorrow; but now, thanks to you, my child is lifted out of the mire in which her poor broken-hearted old father had placed her."

Lily did not say a word.

Monckton would not be thanked. He told old Davis that his daughter's success was entirely owing to her own merits; that a chance had brought her out, but that she must depend no more upon chances, but study hard to go forward, or else she would undoubtedly go back.

"And as you *are* here, Miss Davis," he added "suppose we run through this melodrama that we are to act together. I see we have to endure, and to rescue each other from, all sorts of perils and dangers."

"Am I to act with you again—really again?" asked Lily; "I am so bewildered, I can scarcely realise what has passed."

"To be sure; the part is a poor one, but you must take the rough with the smooth, you know. By-the-by, Mr. Davis, have you seen Mr. Lawson yet about your daughter's future salary?"

"No, Sir; I am to call at the Treasury this morning; and, as you are engaged, I will take my leave. I will call for you, dear (to Lily) as I come back."

"You will trust me with her, then, for half-an-hour?" said Moncton gaily.

"I will trust *her*, Sir," replied the old man, laying his

hand upon her head, and imprinting a soft kiss upon her forehead, "anywhere." And he took his leave.

"Now, Miss Davis, we will begin with the second act, where—"

"Those who like me always call me 'Lily.' *You* used to call me 'Lily' once," she said, with her simple inquiring gaze.

"Oh! but you were a very small person then; you are a grand one now. We must not be too familiar with our leading lady; you must try to be high and distant, like Miss Mortimer."

"I could not" replied Lily, thoughtfully, "be high and distant with—with those who are kind to me. Please call me Lily again," added she in her winning little way.

"Well, you shall," said Monckton, "and I will be—no, no—that will never do. Come, we shall never get through five acts at this rate."

"I want to ask you one question."

"Well, what is it?"

"Do not you think that Shakespeare must have loved some one very, very dearly?"

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I fancy he never could have written such noble sentiments unless he had a great, deep soul; and I do not think that he could have made his heroes and heroines so loved and lovable if he had not loved some one himself. If he did, his affection would have been as grand and lasting as his fame." And Lily's bright eyes flashed again as she spoke her praises of the great magician whose spells she knew by heart. "Yet it is only a silly guess, after all," she added. "Do you remember how I cried when you acted Romeo?" asked she after a pause.

"Ah! now you are flattering my vanity, Lily; you must not do so any more—at least not in the wrong places; you will spoil the part. We shall begin with Romeo and Juliet at Gloucester next week."

"Do you think so? I cannot bear to be a page."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"You know I always act the County Paris Page, and the dress is so—oh! I do detest it." And Miss Lily—who, for all her quiet ways, had a spirit of her own—stamped her little foot with vexation.

"You silly child, do you think you are going back to your fairies and pages again?"

"I really had forgotten," she replied with a pleasant laugh.

"You will be our Juliets, and our Paulines, and our Rosalinds, and, if you study enough, our Lady Macbeths and Julias."

"And shall I always act with you?"

Monckton looked steadily at her for a moment without answering, whilst a crimson flush dyed the poor girl's face and neck.

"No, Lily," he said gravely; "not always."

"I shall never be able to act with any one else—I should not dare."

"Lily, do not say that, because it is foolish. I do not know that you will ever act with me again. I must tell you that I am upon the stage only for my amusement: acting is pastime to me—it is daily bread to you. Persevere and study, and receive the glorious satisfaction—richer than any applause that you can ever gain—that you are placing above want, in his declining years, the good old man who has till now toiled so painfully for you. Persevere,

Lily, for his sake, if not for your own. You know little of the stage as yet. You will be thrown in contact with many better actors than myself—with some few, perhaps, worse. Make up your mind to act with anybody, under any circumstances, and always to do your best, or give it up at once."

"I always thought that you were superior to any of us," said Lily, in a sad, low tone. "I only wonder that you ever took any notice of poor little me ; but oh ! you *have* been so kind !" and, on the grateful impulse of the moment, she raised Monckton's hand to her lips and kissed it

It was a kiss, Sir, such as few of our sex I am afraid would desire or deserve from such a giver. It was a kiss, lady, that your best-loved daughter might have imprinted upon her father's hand ; but Monckton shrunk from it as though an adder had bitten him.

He started, and passed rapidly to the window. Lily, scared at his altered manner, buried her face in her hands, and, when Monckton turned suddenly round, he saw the great round tears oozing between her slender fingers.

"Lily," he said, in a gentler tone than he had ever used to her before, "Lily, look up ; you must not give way thus. No, I am not one bit offended,—why should I be ? You shall find that I am your true friend, Lily. Look here : this card contains the name and address of a gentleman in London who knows me intimately. If, when we part, as, of course, we must, some day, you should need an adviser or assistance of *any kind*, write to me, under cover to him ; do not call. Now, dry your eyes, or your father will fancy I have been scolding you."

When Lily went home, she took that little piece of

pasteboard out of her bosom, and kissed and cried over it. Upon it was printed—

Mr. Cecil Thornton,
4, Vine Tree Buildings,
Temple.

Mr. Lawson sate in his Manager's room, paying his bills with a satisfied air, for the benefit had been a lucrative one, and his prospects at Gloucester were good. A letter lay before him unopened, and when he had discharged his last liability, and counted the surplus, which he put carefully away in his strong box, he complacently lighted a cigar, put up his legs on the sofa, and read as follows :—

"SIR,—

Before I go further, it is necessary for me to remind you of the understanding with which I entered your *troupe*,—as an amateur for my own amusement and your profit. It was this,—that it should be allowable for either of us to discontinue the connexion at any time, and for any reason. I shall be many miles from H—— before you receive this. I am sorry to leave you thus abruptly, but circumstances have arisen that make it peremptory for me to depart without delay. Wishing you every success in your profession, I am, faithfully yours,

CHARLES MONCKTON.

Here was a blow ! He had been counting upon his two "stars" to bring him in a rich harvest during the remainder of the summer. He had advanced Lily's salary from twelve shillings to three pounds a-week. This he could afford to do, as he paid Monckton nothing ; but, on the contrary, owed him money. He rushed off to his lodgings. Where had Mr. Monckton gone ? The landlady did not know. Perhaps Miss Davis might ; she was with him just before he packed up and started.

A horrible thought flashed across the unhappy Manager's

mind. They had gone together. He had lost both his "stars" at one fell swoop. He ran wildly into old Davis's room, and there, the first thing that he saw was the astonished face of Lily.

The Manager breathed again—

"Where's Mr. Monckton?"

"I dare say you will find him at home, Sir," said Lily.

"At home, indeed! Do me the favour to read that," and he gave Lily the letter.

She read it, turned deadly pale, slowly and calmly re-folded and returned it—then fell in a death-like faint where she stood.

The Manager's coarse mind was moved to pity—"Ah! I see, poor child, poor little girl. He was a handsome fellow—too bad of him to leave her and *me* in the lurch like this." He called the father and the landlady, who, by dint of doing each something entirely antagonistic to the efforts of the other (as is orthodox when a lady faints), they at length restored poor Lily to consciousness. Time rolled on, and Lily Davis became celebrated, and had offers from several London Managers—but the politic Mr. Lawson had induced her to sign a two years' engagement to him, and I promise you, he made the most of her. It was hard work, very hard work, and our Lily was but a delicate plant. She went on bravely, though, and never once complained. But the Lily was fading—fading away.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE WORLD.

LADY HALLOWDALE was a woman of fashion *plus*. A heart—for my definition of which you will please to turn to my last chapter but one. She knew perfectly well all the ins and outs, the ups and downs, the laws, and rights and wrongs of that circle of three miles which people call "the world." She was a very independent individual, was Lady Hallowdale. She did what she considered "correct" because she thought it was so—not because it was "done"—and she despised what was silly or mean, no matter who did it. Various was the estimation in which she was held in consequence; some said she was a prude; others declared that *their* daughters should never enter her doors; and they kept their word, most probably, because they were not invited within them. She entertained largely, and her parties were remarkable, more for who were there, than how many. Hers was not the sort of house to which Jack, who had been there once before, could obtain an invitation for Tom, who would take the liberty of bringing Harry—men of artistic or literary merits—pleasant fellows, and cheerful unaffected girls who would enjoy themselves and help others to do the same, were always welcome; and the kind hostess made no inquiries about their great-grandfathers, and cared little who their tailors and milliners might be. Do not suppose, however, that she was not particular in the selection of her guests. She welcomed only such as the most exclusive *might have* received if they could have found them out.

To find nice people out was Lady Hallowdale's favourite pursuit, and she was very successful in it. I have told you all this because she was aunt to Ada and Fanny Glamour, and because they went on a visit to her to be presented at Court, and to go through the London season under her chaperonage.

Towards the close of one of her pleasant balls Lady Hallowdale said to Ada,—

" My love, I want to introduce you to a partner. You know they call my parties ' wild beast shows.' I wish to introduce you to one of my favourite ' wild beasts.' He is a little too fond of growling, but is agreeable, a good dancer, and, upon the whole, harmless ; his name is Thornton—Cecil Thornton."

Five minutes afterwards she led up a gentleman, whom Ada instantly recognised as Mr. Monckton, the tragedian ; and having performed that mystic ceremony, so dear to the eyes of all true Britons, and until the performance of which they must continue to scowl at each other to the end of time, left them to find their way to the dancing-room.

" I feel that I owe you some explanation," began Thornton, who had noticed the start which Ada gave as he appeared, together with her embarrassed manner on the occasion of his introduction ; " we have met before."

" Yes, twice," Ada replied ; " once in the park by the river at home, and once in the theatre at H——."

Now my belief is, that a well-seasoned young lady would have pretended not to have recollected so much ; but Ada was not well-seasoned.

" was acting merely for amusement," continued Cecil.

"I have a wild restless disposition, and take great pleasure in disgracing myself and my family."

"You are not serious" said Ada, puzzled at the quiet irony of his tone.

"I am, though. I am an exceedingly improper person; at least, my friends say so, and who should know one better than one's friends? Ask that young lady opposite if what I say is not true; she is my sister."

"Indeed!" said Ada; "then we shall see you on Tuesday; we are going to Mrs. Thornton's concert."

"Oh, dear no; my family and I are not upon visiting terms. You know the old adage, 'There is a skeleton in every house.' Well, my lady mother is more politic than her neighbours; she puts her skeleton out upon board wages. Behold him here," and Cecil tapped his waist-coat and smiled bitterly.

"Pray do not speak in that way," Ada said, "you distress me."

"Then I will not. Pardon me for boring you about my own affairs. I like to have the start of my friends in detailing my wickedness—that is all. Now to talk of something else. I have amused myself all night by standing behind some of these gay young fellows that dance every dance, taking notes of what they say. Have you been to the Opera lately? that is, I believe, the approved method of commencing a conversation."

Ada felt more than half inclined to request Cecil Thornton to take her back again to Lady Hallowdale, but remembering that he had been introduced as an "eccentric," overcame her feeling of anger at his flippancy, and, glancing in her quiet way at his immovable countenance to see if she could detect anything like a sneer, she replied very dryly:—

"I have been to the Opera, lately, Mr. Thornton."

"Ah," he replied, "I see that sort of commencement will not do—you do not talk 'small talk.'"

"Oh, yes, I do—to small people."

"Humph! Am I to take that as a compliment?"

"Mr. Thornton," said Ada looking him full in the face, "I have often heard Lady Hallowdale speak of you. I have read your books."

"Do you like them?"

"I have neither the ability, nor the inclination to be your critic; but I was about to add when you interrupted me—"

"Pardon me, pray proceed."

"That when a man who is publicly known to be able to say better things, condescends to such common places as you were about to treat me with—second hand—it must be the result either of gross affectation, or of his having placed a very low estimate on the capacity of his hearer."

"I think we had better take a turn," suggested Thornton drily.

By the time the waltz was over, he had recovered from Miss Ada's home-thrust, and began, as usual, to say spiteful things of every body, in his cynical, witty way. Poor fellow! spiteful things had been said of him until he began to think that people cared to say and hear nothing else. But Ada had a good word and a kind thought as an anodyne for all his harsh ones, and the keen edge of his polished sarcasm was blunted ignominiously against her simple outspoken gentleness. At last he was completely beaten. "Miss Glamour," asked he after a pause, "have you any brothers?"

"No."

"Not one?"

"Not one."

"Oh, if I had had a sister!"

"You have one."

"She was a child when I was a man. No, I mean if I had had a sister who could have been an adviser to me; a friend who would speak as—no matter—I should be a better and a happier man."

"Most persons suppose they would be better and happier if they had something which they have not," Ada replied, "but, I think that if we are but true to ourselves we shall find *in ourselves* an adviser and friend equal to any that this world can afford us."

"Good words! good words!" exclaimed Thornton with a suspicious glitter in his eye.

They now returned to where Lady Hallowdale was sitting.

"Will you put them in your next book?" asked Ada with a smile, as she released his arm.

"I will keep them here," he replied, pressing his hand to his heart, and so he left her, and immediately afterward quitted the house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

I COULD tell you, if I chose, exactly how it was that several of my intimate friends committed matrimony: but I must profess my utter inability to give you the details of the process under which others of them "fell in love."

Can you, Sir, divulge by “what spells, what charms, what conjurations, and what mighty magic,” your friend Jones cut you out with the rich Miss Brown? Can you tell (without consulting that amiable lady) how it was that afterwards you won the heart of the present Mrs. Smith, who had refused so many eligible offers, as your veracious father-in-law took care to inform you when you were closeted with him in that awful study, and the conversation turned upon settlements? Do you know how that smooth-faced young barrister from the Temple—to whom, in an evil moment, you gave a general invitation to use his knife and fork at your hospitable board on Sundays—managed to steal away (confound him!) the affections of your only daughter, and to persuade her to become his wife, before you had ceased to regard her as a child? No, you cannot. Don’t tell me you can. You know that these deeds *were* done—but how? Ah! tell me exactly how; and I will take out a patent for the process, and make twenty thousand a-year by letting out licenses to use it. How, then, am *I*, who have no experience in such matters, to say why Ada’s heart fluttered when Cecil Thornton’s name was mentioned? How am I to account for the thousand and one absurdities of which that usually collected individual was guilty during the greater part of this eventful summer, when he was a constant visitor at Hallowdale House? Why did he stand in the passage, imbecilely fumbling with the handle of the door of the room in which he knew Ada to be; and why, when he entered, did he pretend not to see her, and put on an affected air of surprise when her presence was declared? Simply because he was “spooney”—I use the term advisedly—spooney! If sheer, downright, unobtrusive devotion to a woman will make its

object love you, then that was the cause of Thornton's success ; for Ada loved him, and told him so one day, when he arrived charged to the muzzle with fine speeches which had taken him days to prepare, and which, as a matter of course, he clean forgot at the very moment when they were most wanted—when he called himself all sorts of naughty names for presuming to address her, and her all sorts of nice ones for listening to him—when Mr. Glamour (with whom he had got on famously from the first) said he was a worthy young fellow—when Lady Hallowdale kissed him, and her liege lord (who was deep in the nation's affairs) said very wisely, that "young people would be young people," (a fact in our natural history that, I believe, has not been denied, even in Parliament)—and when Ada—well, I am not going to tell you what Ada did to him, but you may be sure it was nothing very dreadful to bear.

I need not tell you with what a balmy blessed fragrance fell *rest*, perfect happy rest, upon such a restless, self-tormenting mind as Thornton's. He evinced no exultation—no vehement joy at his new bliss. He welcomed it as one would welcome the arrival of some great long-expected guest, with a deep reverence, and daintily ministered to it. He was impatient with bantering acquaintances ; the subject of their mirth was a sacred one with him. No one had ever loved him till now. Affection was something entirely new to him, but he had long, long yearned to receive it. He was rather a serious lover, except when alone with Ada, and then I do not think that his bitterest enemy could have accused him of not being happy.

He wrote, as in duty bound, to his mother, apprising her of his choice and prospects, and received in return :

lecture, and an offer of part of the property to which he would be entitled at her death. Mrs. Thornton was glad that he was about to abandon a vicious life, and for the family credit, &c., &c., would place to his account, &c., &c. I think that it is only on the stage, and in novels (which I decline taking as faithful delineations of human character), that heroes fling purses of gold at the feet of their donors, reject with "scor-rnn" desirable offers of pecuniary assistance. Thornton was composed of flesh and blood—not paper and ink; so he pocketed the affront—and the money. Ada, indeed, being a woman, and proud of her lover, was disposed to resent the one and return the other; but Cecil had sufficiently overcome his awe of that pleasant little person to call her a goose, and to take a liberty with her pouting lips, which, I am bound to say, was not savagely resented.

He forsook his old haunts and all his jolly companions (such of them, at least, as he could not introduce to Ada). He deserted his chambers in the Temple, and took lodgings in an extremely fashionable, and very dirty street, close to Hallowdale House—it being arranged that when the good old Christmas time should come round, he should lead his bride through the stately park of her ancestors to the little church where all the Glamours had pledged their faith, and there make her his own for ever. And a very good arrangement too, only—

CHAPTER VII.

SOME months after his acceptance as Ada's future husband, Cecil Thornton went to his chambers, in the Temple, for some important papers that he had to lay before her father. He found a letter, delivered long ago, addressed to C. Monckton, Esq., to his care.

It was from old Davis.

It was a poor, misspelt, heart-broken letter. Lily was dying. Excitement and over-work had brought on fever, and fever had induced that insidious foe—Consumption. She could act no more. All their little savings were spent. He had said that they were to write to him if they wanted a friend. Could he (Mr. Monckton) obtain some engagement for him (the poor old man) that he might work for his sinking child.

Cecil went at once to the address given—a back street off Covent Garden. "They's gone!" the landlady of the house replied to his inquiry; "and when people could not pay their way, it was time they *was* gone." The good lady did not add where. Thornton's kind heart, rendered still kinder by his new happiness, was troubled. How was he to find them out? Mr. Lawson, if he could only get at him, might give him a clue. Some of the theatrical agents might know; he would go and try. Musing as he went along, he stumbled over some furniture outside a broker's shop, and a little desk fell to the ground.

"There now, stoopid, see what you've been and done!"
cried the proprietor of the displaced article, picking

Thornton thought he had seen that desk before; he asked to look at it. It was Lily's; it had been her mother's; it was the very last thing that they were likely to part with.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"I want twelve-and-sixpence for it," said the broker.

"That is no answer to my question," rejoined Thornton; "but there is the money. Now, where or from whom did you get it?"

"Well, it was an old cove as brought it here to sell; he did not want to part with it, but he was jolly hard up—he was!" said the broker with a laugh, the joke was such a good one.

"Where does he live?"

"Well, I don't know; not fur off, I should say. He made me promise not to sell it for six months, to give him a chance of buying it back. He's a rum un, he is; he comes every day to look at it; he'll be out-and-out vexed when he finds it gone." And this being another good joke, the broker laughed again.

"Do you think that any one hereabouts knows where he is to be found?" inquired Cecil.

"Well, my daughter might know. Polly! (shouting) where does the old gent as comes after the desk lodge?"

Polly, who was upstairs, screamed out, "At Mrs. Potts's, over the coal-shed, next street but two to the right, opposite 'The George.'"

Thornton went his way, with the little desk under his arm.

* * * * *

If Lily had known that her father had written to Monckton, she would never have let him send the letter.

It was only after a hard struggle with his pride, that the old man (who had read the heart of his child) brought himself to post it. But to see her sinking, slowly and uncomplainingly, before his eyes—to hear the doctor say that nothing but rich generous fare would keep her alive, and to have no means of buying it, was too much for him. She was his pride—his darling—the only thing left to love him in the world.

It was a poor, dirty little dwelling that in which they lodged. The splendid “George,” with its plate-glass windows and blazing lights, stared it out of countenance, and made it look poorer and dirtier still. They had but one room, and that a small one, looking out upon black smoky tiles, and blacker and smokier chimneys. A mere attic, with a couch at one end, which was Lily’s bed by night, and a corner curtained off at the other, where the father slept upon the ground.

“You enjoyed your sponge-cakes, darling,” said old Davis the day that Thornton brought the desk; “I thought you would.”

“Oh, indeed I did,” said Lily, “better than anything you have brought me for a long time.”

Poor Lily! it was little that she had had to enjoy.

“I’m so glad; eat them all up now; eat them all—don’t leave a crumb,” said the old man cheerfully. But it was with a hungry look that he turned away from the dainties and pushed them towards the sick girl.

“Put on your coat, dear father; you’ll catch cold,” said Lily.

“It is very hot.”

“I do not feel it so.”

"Ah, but you are ill, and I am well and strong," he answered pleasantly. "I like to take it off."

"Have you been to the theatre again to-day?" Lily asked, after a pause.

"Yes."

"And would they engage you?" she demanded anxiously.

"No; they said I was too old; they actually had the audacity to say I was old—I, who could act with the best of them" said Davis, with mock indignation; "and it was only to carry a flag at a pantomime," he added to himself, with a sigh. "But I won't be put down. I'll try again," he muttered between his clenched teeth.

"You will not be offended if I ask you one question, dear?" said Lily.

"Of course not," said the old man, taking tenderly the thin pale hand she stretched out to him.

"And you will answer me truly?"

"Truly."

"How much money have we left?"

"How much money, dear?"

"Oh, father! tell me truly—truly as you promised." And there was no escape from her earnest eyes.

"Why, none, dearie—at present," said her father in as cheerful a tone as he could assume, as though an argosy of bullion were expected in a day or two. "None at present, but——"

"When was the last spent?"

"Yesterday, to pay the rent; good Mrs. Potts must have her rent, you know."

"Then how did you buy these?" said Lily quickly, pointing to the last of the cakes.

The old man cast an involuntary glance at his yellow shirt-sleeves.

Lily had eaten the coat, or its equivalent from the pawn-shop !

"Oh, father ! father ! I see it now. How could you do it ? How could you make me so selfish ? Oh, I would have starved first." And she burst into a paroxysm of weeping.

"Hush, Lily, hush," said the old man, bending over her. "Hush, you must not say so. You know that I would coin my heart's blood for you if I could. I shall soon get work, and then I shall have it back again ; or, better still, buy a bran new coat. Think of that, Lily—a new one !"

"God help him !" exclaimed Lily in a choking voice.

"In His own good time He will, dear," said old Davis quietly.

Good reader, these are stage-players. This girl has worn paint and spangles—has smiled upon drunken fellows in the pit for money. This man has spent all his life with actors and actresses, and yet we find them praying to the Almighty, and trusting in Him, just as sincerely as though they rented a private pew under Mr. Primtext, and invited that celebrated preacher to dinner twice a-week.

I do not know what Cecil Thornton (or Monckton, as he was to these poor people) thought when he saw their woful plight—I only know what he *did*. He went out, promising to return in half-an-hour. He did so, and then it was clear what had been passing in his mind. First of all, enter a celebrated physician for Lily—finger to pulse, stethoscope to chest, prescription, tonics, generous port wine, every delicacy she might fancy ! Hey, Presto !

Enter chemist's boy with tonics, wine merchant's boy with wine, confectioner's boy with jelly, rusks, and soup.

No physician was needed for old Davis. A single glance at his eyes showed his complaint—it was hunger, gnawing hunger, Sir! Smack! went Harlequin's wand again. Enter frizzing steak, of pantomimic proportions, and a pot of porter, with a head like a cauliflower, from the "George." Thanks! Gratitude! Nonsense! Mr. Davis was not to talk. He was to eat, drink, and be merry. Once get Lily well, Thornton said, and he would demand cent. per cent. for the outlay.

It was not enough for Cecil—Cecil, the cynic, the man-hater—to provide for the wants of that one day. He set about thinking how he could get employment for the Davises, such as would place them above want; or devise some scheme for making them think that they were earning a subsistence, and to help them himself without hurting their pride. Have I not said that real people do not reject desirable offers through this same *pride*, and am I not now, stupidly, contradicting myself? Not so. Be good enough to remember that I was speaking of "good society," and "good society" is not half so particular in such matters as are low persons, like old Davis and his daughter.

Thornton remembered having once seen Lily making wax-flowers, so, when she became stronger, he bought her the requisite materials, bid her set to work like a good girl, and see what she could do to help her father; and, when her task was accomplished, he brought her back a bright new sovereign as the price of her light, easy labours.

One day, about three weeks after his first visit to

Mrs. Potts's lodgings opposite the "George," he entered the sitting-room of the Davises—they had three rooms now—very cheerfully.

"I have just heard," he said, "that Mr. Star, of the Walworth Theatre, wants a prompter. I have seen his agent, Mr. Davis, and have mentioned to him your name as an experienced person likely to suit. The salary is two pounds a week. Will you take it?"

Would he take it? Wouldn't he!

"I think you are quite right," Monckton replied, "Lily requires fresh air, and you can get that at Camberwell, where I know of a pretty little cottage that will just suit you, at an easy distance from the theatre, with a garden and all, so that Lily can make her wax-flowers from nature."

Thus matters were arranged. Old Davis became Mr. Star's prompter, and gave great satisfaction. Lily took up her abode in the pretty cottage, and was wheeled out into the fields; made her flowers in the sunshine; and, if she could have gained a little more strength, they would have been very happy.

Now, I do not think that there was anything in Cecil Thornton's conduct towards this old man and his child that you, or I, or anybody else, could have been ashamed of. I own I should be pleased rather than otherwise at the lady of my love hearing of such good actions; but Cecil kept them a profound secret, even from Ada.

I should tell you that Fanny Glamour took great delight in teasing Thornton about his theatrical campaign at H——. "What has become of your Desdemona, Sir?" she would inquire. "Did you really smother her that night? Don't scowl at me, Mr. Monckton. Shall I get

you a piece of burnt cork to make your face its true colour? There! there! look Ada! he is clutching at the sofa-pillows! Upon my word, were I you, I would not trust him." And thus would she go on teasing him, until he either burst out laughing at her sallies, and stopped her mouth with a kiss, or else rushed out of the room in a rage.

Ada did not enjoy this raillery any more than did Thornton. Her lover had told her all that had passed between Lily and himself; and she was by no means pleased at having him continually reminded of this little person with whom he had parted under such delicate circumstances—she was a little bit, just the wee-est bit in the world, jealous of the pretty actress. What business had she to love *her* Cecil? and "She *did* love you, Cecil," she would say, "that is quite clear, and I won't have her talked about any more."

So Cecil kept his own counsel. What need was there for him to go and brag about his kind actions? Mentioning them was mere glorification of himself. Ada did not want to hear about the Davises; why, then, should he tell *her*? It was not keeping his promise of having perfect confidence in her, certainly; but then it would not last long. Old Davis had entered upon his duties as prompter. Lily had so improved in her flower-making now, that she could get a good price for them anywhere. There was no longer any occasion for him to call every Saturday and carry them off to that reckless trader who paid such foolish prices for them—in other words, to take them home to his lodgings, and lock them up in a drawer. What did he know about selling wax-flowers? No; he would just get his humble friends comfortably settled; then they should see his face no more, and he would never have another secret from Ada.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE new prompter at the Walworth Theatre was more surprised than charmed to find Miss Mortimer a member of the company ; but to that lady, if you might believe her, the meeting was one of unalloyed satisfaction. " And how was dear Lily ?" she asked ; " and was she really getting stronger ?—No ! how very sad ! Se must go very often, and sit with the poor suffering darling, and nurse her. She was such a loss. Mr. Davis did not know how they all missed her."

Miss Mortimer was by no means the sort of person that the old man would have chosen as a companion for his child ; but, I think I have said, that when Miss Mortimer had made up her mind to do anything, it was not so easy to baffle her. She saw Lily ; came again and again ; and soon wormed out all that had passed since last they met. Cecil Thornton was only known to the Davises by his stage name of Monckton, but their visitor had reason of her own for believing that it was an assumed one ; so she never rested till she found out who he really was, and all about him, including, of course, his engagement to Ad Glamour, and hated him therefore more bitterly than ever.

There was a gentleman "about town" at this time who took great delight in collecting all the scandal that was to be swept up, by such as do not mind dirtying their fingers in back staircases and green-rooms, and retailing it to lovers of this style of garbage, at the clubs. If you wanted to have a report speedily and widely spread, all you had to do was to breathe it, under a pledge of profound secrecy, to Mr. Trainer. So, to this reliable person—meeting him

one night in the green-room—Miss Mortimer, in the most innocent way in the world, narrated just as much as she thought proper about Cecil's visits to the pleasant little cottage at Camberwell, and the position of its occupants—just enough, in fact, to give colour and circumstance to a most foul and injurious libel on Cecil's truth and Lily's honour.

How true are those lines of the Laureate—

" And the minister made it his text, and he said, likewise,
That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies ;
For a lie that is all a lie may be met and battled outright ;
But a lie that is half a truth is a harder matter to fight."

In less than a week it was all over Pall Mall, and St. James's-street, that Cecil Thornton, who was engaged to that charming Miss Glamour, was keeping an establishment on the sly, presided over by a certain little actress, with whom he had been performing in the country ; and, was it not a shame ?

A few days before this scandal was circulated, Thornton had gone into Northamptonshire, to be present at his sister's wedding. Mr. Glamour, whilst reading the newspaper at his club, overheard his intended son-in-law's name mentioned by some young fellows chattering in a window, one of whom was Mr. Trainer.

" I beg your pardon, gentlemen," he said, " but your conversation was so loud, that I could not fail to hear it ; and, as I am the father of the young lady whom you have just named, and, as Mr. Thornton is my friend, I beg to tell you, that I fully and implicitly believe that the report to which you were alluding is a base and malicious fabrication, and I shall hold those who repeat it responsible for what they say."

Mr. Trainer was exceedingly sorry—people really did over-hear such uncomfortable things—but as the accuracy of what he (Mr. Trainer) had said was impugned, he also begged to state that he was not in the habit of asserting anything that was not perfectly correct ; as, in this instance Mr. Glamour might ascertain by making the proper inquiries.

Mr. Glamour returned to Hallowdale House vexed and dispirited, and found Ada crying and wringing her hands over a letter, without date or signature, which she had just received. It was an insidious, plausible epistle as ever the enemy of our race put it in the heart of man or woman to write. There was not a word of anger in it from beginning to end. It was cruelly calm and to the purpose, and maliciously honest. The writer was aware that the course she (it was clearly a woman) had pursued would cause suspicion to be fixed upon her motives ; but circumstances prevented her making herself known at present. She felt great interest in Miss Glamour, and might, if her good intentions were believed, be the means of rescuing her from impending misery. If they were misjudged—she had done her best, and what she considered to be her duty. Then followed an account of Thornton's faithlessness ; how he had abandoned Lily Davis at H.— ; how she had pined away in consequence ; how they had met again lately in London ; how Thornton's old affection had revived ; how their intimacy had been renewed ; and how Ada's plighted husband had taken and furnished a house for this little actress, and was her constant visitor !

"I don't believe a word of it," exclaimed Mr. Glamour indignantly. "Dry your eyes, my pet. Never fear; I'll soon hunt out this calumny to its origin. I'll go at once

and trace out this actress. No, no; I'll not be a spy upon the boy, even if he be a scoundrel. Give me that letter, Ada. I'll write to Cecil immediately, and see what he will say to this scandal." He did write, and to the following effect:—

DEAR CECIL,—

A very painful rumour is in circulation. It is said that you have renewed your intimacy with the young person with whom you were acting at H—, under circumstances which I need not detail; as, of course, the whole thing is a fabrication. Pray write by return of post, and give me a formal authority, which I can make public use of, for contradicting it.

Affectionately yours,

HARRY GLAMOUR.

To this letter came the following answer, by return of post:—

DEAR SIR,—

It is perfectly true that I encountered Miss Davis this summer, and that I have frequently visited her father and herself at their house, under circumstances which, as you know them (poor Cecil thought he knew the truth), I need not attempt to excuse. I was wrong, of course, to keep it secret, but a too tender regard for dear Ada's little prejudices made me do so. It only remains for me to say, that the person to whom you have alluded is now, I hope, provided for; and consequently, there will be no occasion for us to meet again. Give my love to Ada, and believe me,

Most sincerely yours,

CECIL THORNTON.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Glamour, as he finished this unlucky epistle, "he acknowledges it all. He has been backwards and forwards, from my child to this—this creature of his. '*Little prejudices* indeed! the man must be mad. Was ever such audacity? He tires of his

mistress—pensions her off—and then sends his love to Ada. ‘There is no occasion to see her again.’ I should think not, indeed! My poor—poor darling!” and the tears came full and fast into the kind father’s eyes, “it will break her heart; but,” he added between his clenched teeth, “there shall be an end to this.”

The following morning a thunderbolt fell upon Cecil Thornton, in the shape of a second letter from Mr. Glamour, in the following words:—

SIR,—

The confession contained in your letter of yesterday leaves but one course open to me. In the name of my daughter, and in my own, I declare that, from this hour, the engagement between you is at an end for ever. I am bitterly disappointed. Miss Glamour has requested me to enclose your letters to her, and I desire that you will forward to me any writings that you may possess of hers.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

HENRY GLAMOUR.

It was some time before Cecil could believe his senses. Of what had he been guilty to deserve this? he asked himself. He had done a kind action, and not boasted about it—that was all. He had kept Ada in the dark respecting the affairs of a person whose name she had often said she disliked to hear mentioned—nothing more. Was he to be expected to harden his heart against all good feeling, because there happened to be a woman in the case, and he was engaged? Because Ada was jealous, was he to be brutal? No; it was an excuse—a paltry quibble, upon which to break off the engagement. She had never loved him—fickle cold-hearted girl. She should never have acted thus. “Why should she,” he exclaimed, fiercely dashing away the tears that were blinding him; “why

should she love me? What is there in me to be loved? Idiot that I was ever to expect it! But she should not triumph over him—no, no. He would go straight back to London—he would make a point of meeting her—he would pass her with a cheerful countenance—he would chatter, dance, and flirt with the emptiest of her sex, in her presence; no one should say that he wore his hand upon his heart. But then—she had loved him once—a little, a very little, perhaps, but enough to make her sad. It might distress her to see him again, after what had passed. No, he would not persecute her; she wished to part with him, and she should have her will. He would go back to his old life and his old companions. What was the use of leading a steady life when this was his reward? He would be the *roué*, the rake, the gambler, over again. He would do what he had never done before—he would drink. Memory was a curse, and he would get rid of it as quickly as possible, and hey! for a short life and a merry one! Was he to give up all for a girl?—not a bit of it. But she was not one worth the whole world to him? She had plucked the canker from his heart that had been gnawing that heart away, and had planted in its stead the first happiness and peace that he had ever known. She was all purity and goodness—too good, too pure for him. Her love was too priceless a treasure for him to gain; but though not his, he would not become less worthy to have won it. She might not, did not, love him, but she should never despise him."

Such were the wild, tender, contradictory emotions which filled this poor fellow's stricken and undisciplined heart. There was another letter for him this sad morning, which might have given him some consolation had he

opened it ; but he was too full of sorrow to notice it. It was from Lady Hallowdale, and ran as follows :—

DEAR CECIL,—

I am convinced there is some miserable misunderstanding. You have a bitter enemy somewhere. Remain where you are. On no account come to town, leave him or her to me, and if I can but get a clue to this mystery, believe me it shall not long remain one.

Your old Friend,

MARY HALLOWDALE.

Mr. Glamour's first impulse was to take his daughter home ; but Lady Hallowdale said, " No, do not make more fuss than can be helped about this matter. She need not go out anywhere ; let her stay quietly with me."

It was sad to see the poor girl ; the more so, for she was so cheerful, so considerate to all around her, so anxious to help them in their endeavours to divert her mind from grief, without letting them suppose that she knew their motives. They could not carry out their kind intentions, but why should they not be happy in the idea that they were succeeding ? There was a worn look upon the pretty gentle face, but the old kind smile upon it was unaltered. The sorrow of a woman who has raised a mortal into something little less than a god, and has showered upon him the whole strength of an unalterable love, and then has found that her idol is clay, is a sacred and a fearful thing. It made her dearest friends mourn to see how calmly Ada bore it. All noticed that her silent grief was wearing her away, yet no one but her cousin Fanny was aware how much she suffered, and even she did not know the worst. " Her pillow is never dry," said Fanny to Lady Hallowdale ; and " it almost breaks my heart to hear the poor darling sobbing in her sleep."

Ah! how bitterly did Fanny now repent her pleasantries with Cecil about Lily Davis; she could account for all now,—his black-looks—endeavours to change the subject.

"I would never give him another thought, Ada," said Fanny one day; "the base ungrateful—" But Ada's eyes flashed fire as she laid her hands upon the speaker's lips, and the sentence was never completed. "Hush, hush, Fanny. Not even *you* shall dare to revile him in my hearing;" and the poor child's momentary indignation having passed away, she fell weeping upon her cousin's bosom." "Ah! Fanny dear," she murmured; "don't judge him too harshly; think of his unloved youth, of his undisciplined heart, and pray with me to God to forgive and help him."

Weeks passed away, sadly enough, at Hallowdale House. Its once cheerful hostess grew silent and reserved. She had not heard from Cecil, and no one could tell what had become of him. Something was preying upon Lady Hallowdale's mind. There was a mystery about her movements, too; strange-looking men called, were shown into her boudoir, and remained closeted with her for hours. The butler was confident he had seen one of them before at a trial, and that he was a detective officer. Lady Hallowdale was evidently occupied in trying to find out somebody or something. She would be absent sometimes for a whole day; would leave home alone, on foot, and return in a hack cab, although the horses wanted exercise, and there were half-a-dozen sorts of carriages for them to be put to. She had a curious way of gazing at Ada, and laying the poor child's head upon her kind motherly bosom, kissing softly the pale throbbing temples; and whenever Mr. Glanmear said that



really they must think of getting back home again, she would say, "Wait awhile; wait awhile, for Ada's sake."

One day Lady Hallowdale returned, after a whole day's absence, looking very pale and stern. The next morning she asked Ada if she could come out for a long drive with her. Ada was charmed to do so; she had seen so little of her kind aunt and hostess lately. Should she tell Fanny to get ready? No, Fanny was not wanted.

Through the grand squares and terraces, where England's aristocracy delight to dwell—through the gay, wealthy streets—over the turgid, pestilential Thames, into dirty, crowded thoroughfares—and again, into a pleasant suburb—rolled, smoothly and fast, that handsome, quiet carriage; and neither of its occupants had as yet spoken a word. Ada was waiting for Lady Hallowdale to begin, and Lady Hallowdale was too full of anxious thoughts to speak. At last, taking her niece's poor wan little hand tenderly in her own, she said—

"I am taking you, dear, to visit a young girl who is dying."

Ada made a gesture of surprise.

"Her story is a strange one, and no less sad than strange. I want you to hear it from her own lips. You will come with me?"

"Oh, yes. Have I ever seen the lady?"

"No; she is a stranger—quite a stranger to you, though you have heard of her."

Lady Hallowdale pulled the check-string at a little cottage. There were flowers in the garden, flowers in the porch, flowers in the windows—sweet flowers everywhere. The door was opened by an old man with a sad face, who led the way to a pleasant fragrant little room, where,

upon a couch, overlooking the garden and the flowers, was lying a young girl, clothed in that awful beauty with which death sometimes endues his early victims. It was with holy awe that Ada gazed upon one so full of this world's beauty, and so near eternity.

"This is the young lady of whom I spoke to you yesterday, Miss Davis," said Lady Hallowdale, after the first recognition and inquiries had been made. "Do you think you have strength to repeat to *her* all you told me?"

"Oh, yes," replied Lily with a smile. "I ask no greater pleasure than to tell it, for it makes others respect and love one who has been so good to me."

And Lily told her simple story, from the day when first she saw Thornton, under his assumed name, down to that on which he last took his leave; and, she knew not why, never came again. When she first mentioned Thornton's name, a burning flush suffused Ada's face; she recoiled, trembling, from the speaker, and cast a reproachful glance at Lady Hallowdale, who was closely watching her; but as Lily proceeded, the averted eyes of her auditor began to meet her own. Contempt and aversion slowly vanished from her countenance, and gave place to pity and affection. Closer and closer did she draw to the dying girl, and before her narrative was half concluded, Ada was upon her knees by her side, clasping her hands in her own, and eagerly drinking in every word she said. When the tale was told, and Lily's sorrows and innocence fully made known, she covered up her face and wept bitterly.

"Oh! how I have wronged——"

"Hush!" said Lady Hallowdale, checking the wild burst of grief that was impending. "Hush, pray! she

knows nothing," she added in a whisper ; "the poison has not reached her."

"Do not think me presuming or unkind, dear," said Ada, after a pause, "but may I ask you one question?"

"Oh, yes!"

"I am sure you loved your benefactor ; did" — and there was some difficulty in getting the words out ; "did he love you?"

"No," replied Lily quite calmly, "no ; his noble, great heart, was another's."

"How do you know?" asked Ada quickly.

"He has told me so, often and often. He has spoken of her—oh, so tenderly ! No one was so good, so beautiful, so true, as his dear Ada. Oh, if I could but see her once, if it were only for a moment, before I—" and her uplifted gaze showed where her greatest hope was set.

"You see her now," said Lady Hallowdale ; "this is Miss Ada Glamour."

A crimson wave flowed over Lily's face and bosom, and ebbed, leaving a deadlier paleness than before.

"You are very, very lovely!" said she, gazing earnestly at Ada's downcast countenance ; "may I kiss your hand?"

Ada stooped down and kissed her lips.

"And so kind ; God bless you ! he will be very happy." And Lily, exhausted by all that she had said and heard, sunk back upon her couch, with clasped hands and closed eyes.

"Happy!" repeated Ada bitterly. "I have broken his heart ! I have wronged his noble nature ! I have thrown away the truest love that ever a woman was blest with. Oh, would that he could hear me confess my fault—would that he could ever forgive it."

"He both hears and forgives, dear," said Lady Hallowdale, opening the glass door that led to the garden; and, in another moment, the lovers were locked in each others arms.

And Lily!

Aye, weep—weep over all that is left of her. But a few minutes ago, and her gentle bosom would have ached when she saw your tears. Her busy little gentle hand would not have rested till it had staunched them.

You may weep on now.

Lead away her poor old father, and leave him alone with his great sorrow. You cannot comfort him.

* * * * *

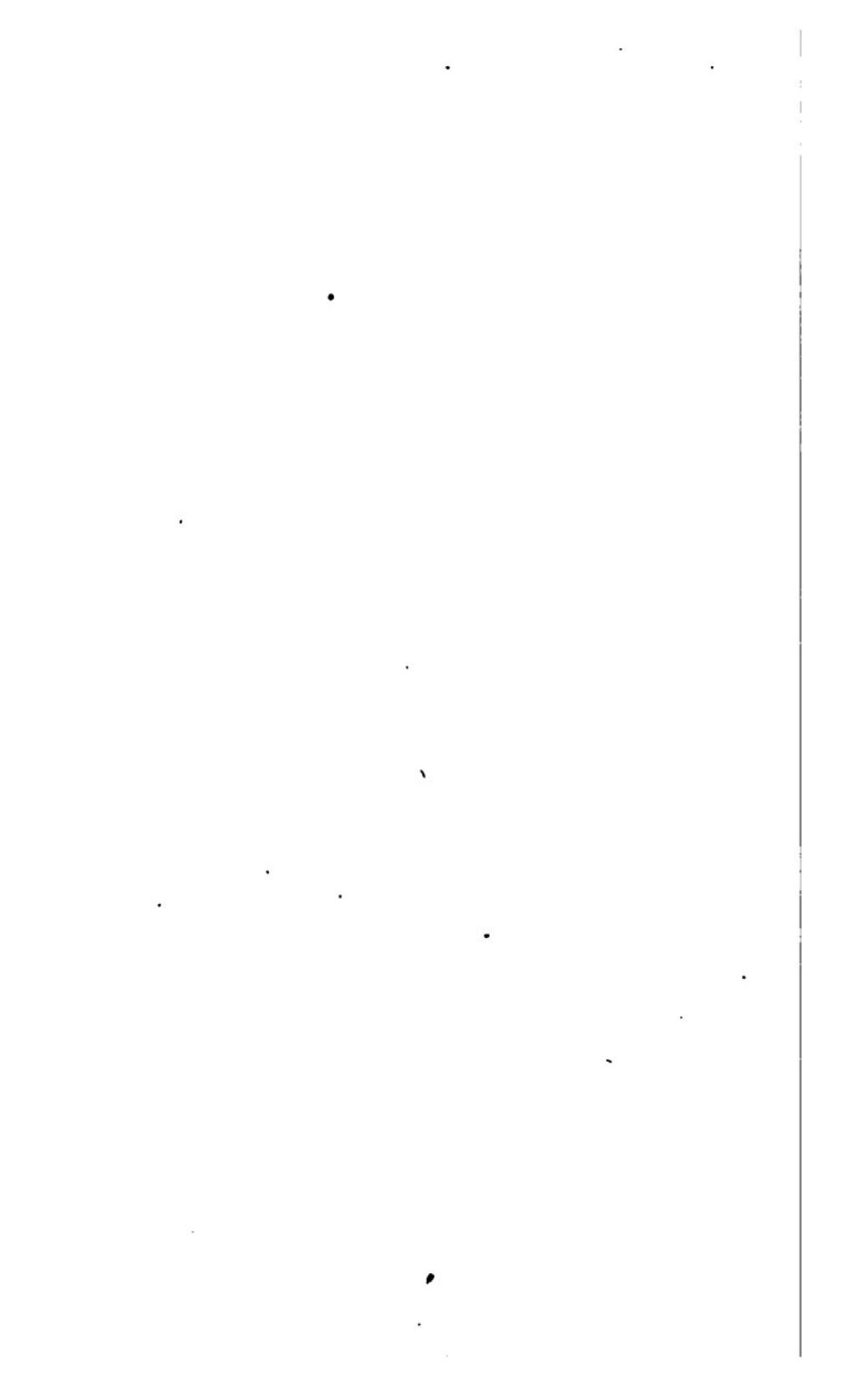
Mr. Trainer still frequents the clubs, and has choice anecdotes, more or less scandalous, to retail for the delectation of his audience. The last time I saw him, he was telling of a body that had been dragged out of one of the canals. It was recognised as that of an actress who had long been in a half-crazed state of mind, and at last had committed suicide. Her name was Mortimer!

Down in pleasant Breconshire, in the stately park near where first Ada saw Cecil Thornton, beneath the shadow of a giant oak, two children are playing. The eldest is a boy, and he is called Cecil, after his father. They wished to give her mother's name, Ada, to the girl, but her mother said, "No; let us call her Lily."

Under God's grace, I think there is little fear of *this* Lily's withering in her beauty and her youth.









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Redding, Cyrus.
Ritchie, Leitch.
Sala, George A.
Thornbury, Walter.
Turner, Godfrey.
Wraxall, Lascelles.
Yates, Edmund.

ARTISTS ILLUSTRATING THIS VOLUME:—

Bennett, C. H.
Browne, H. K. (Phiz).
Gilbert, John.
Hine, H. G.
Macquold, T. R.
McCounell, W.
Meadows, Kenny.

Melville, H. S.
Perich, Julian.
Sargent, G. F.
Skill, F. J.
Warren, H.
Weir, Harrison.

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